

Blitzed

THE STARS ARE ALIGNED

ANDY BELL

"TEN CROWNS IS QUITE HAPPY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME I THINK THE GUNS ARE DRAWN"

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

HAZEL O'CONNOR

"IT'S EASY TO LOOK BACK ON SOMETHING WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH IT. UNFORTUNATELY AT THE MOMENT I'M STILL IN IT."

PLUS

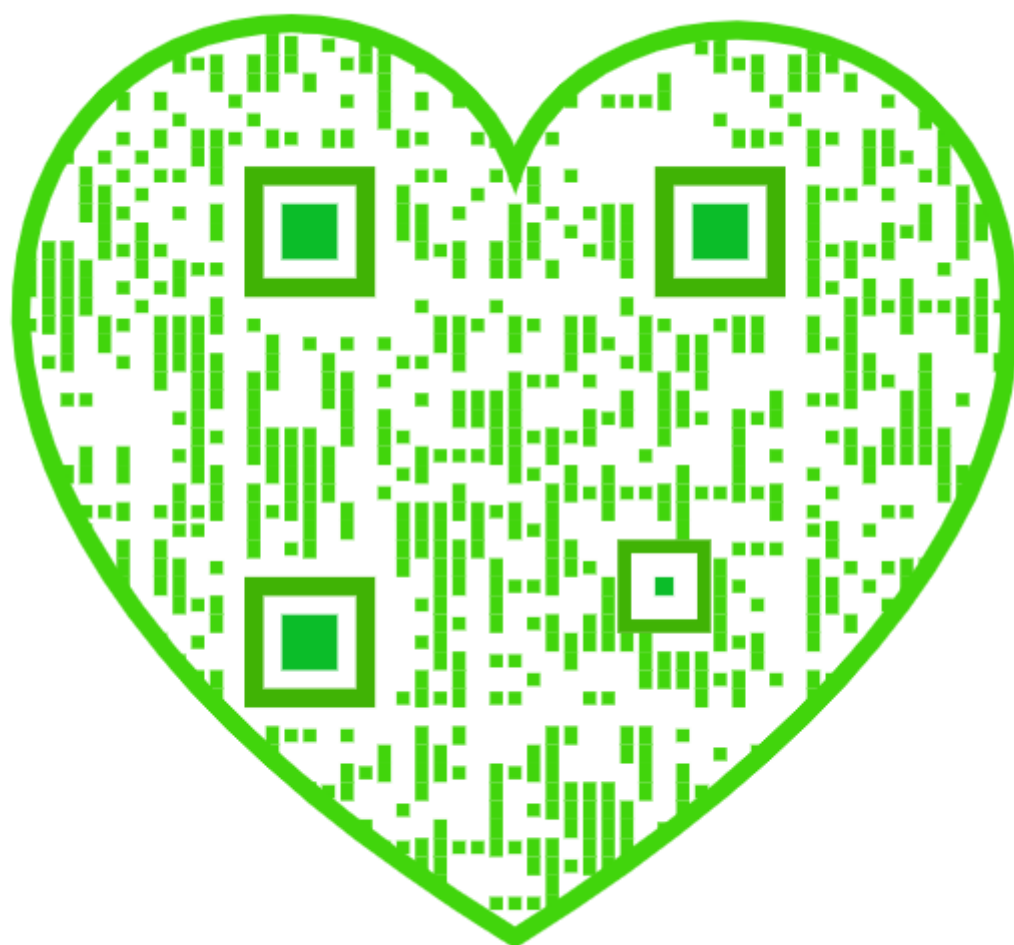
ALISON MOYET, **B-MOVIE**, DICK WITTS, **EXIT NORTH**, FRAGILE SELF, **FRED MANDEL**, HAHA HATS, **INERTIA**, JOHN FOXX, **KIM WILDE**, LENE LOVICH, **MARK REEDER**, MIDGE URE, **PETER MURPHY**, POWER STATION, **SIMPLE MINDS**, SQUEEZE, **STEVE JANSEN**, TANGERINE DREAM, **THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE**, THE DEVOUT, **THE RUDE AWAKENING**, THEREZA BAZAR, **TWIN NOIR**, VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE

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MEET THE TEAM



Kurt Sinclair-Hall - Editor

Musician with The Rude Awakening, remixer, producer of live events, media and radio. Father of two amazing girls and lifelong West Ham supporter. He recovered from a series of critical illnesses in 2014 relating to Swine Flu, a factory-reset moment which reshaped his thinking and life going forward. Kurt's alter-ego Johnny Normal has opened shows for Adam Ant, Blancmange, Altered Images, Wolfgang Flür.



Bridget Gray - Editor

Lover of 80s music, pop culture and all things Synthpop, Bridget is an experienced Business Consultant with an incredibly organised mind, a talented singer, writer and musician with The Rude Awakening, and obsessive about Sci-fi including Star Trek, Doctor Who and classic movies about fighting aliens and AI taking over the planet. Her favourite Womble is Orinoco.



Mik Scarlett

A broadcaster, journalist, musician and DJ, and is probably best known for being one of the first wheelchair users to gain a celebrity status on our TV screens. He's been a regular face in the UK media for 30 years, writing for newspapers, fashion and music magazines, and has written sleeve notes for numerous compilations.



Paul Browne

A music enthusiast interested in a broad spectrum of music genres. He is the founder of the original OMD Website, while also providing design concepts and writing sleeve notes for various OMD reissues. Paul founded The Electricity Club, a dedicated blog focussed on exploring electronic music.



Imogen Bebb

Musician, author and journalist who writes regularly for magazines including Blitzed and Electronic Sound. Her first book was about Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark and was published in 2022. She is currently studying for a Master's degree in Musicology at the University of Cambridge.



Richard Evans

Richard Evans has worked in the music industry for over 30 years and has worked for Andy Bell, Vince Clarke and Erasure since 2009. In 2022 he published the book Listening to the Music the Machines Make. Richard is currently working on a new book for publication sometime in 2026.



Martin James

An academic, professor, and curator of a long-running multi-venue music festival. He has been a music journalist for over thirty years, having trawled the darkened recesses of the world's dingiest clubs in search of the perfect beat. He discovered his love for club life doing the merry dance from Billy's to Blitz.



Marc Massive

Vocalist with Massive Ego since 1996, signed to Out Of Line Music. Marc did work experience at Smash Hits, danced for Boy George, modelled in the 90s, was part of the Romo scene, looked like a geisha Mickey Mouse, DJ'd, ran clubs, co-curated Act Art events, is a vegan animal rights activist and appeared in a Duran Duran video.



Jan Blackwell

Loves music, live gigs and has a passion for photography. She is a proud volunteer board member for a music charity in her home town of Sheffield, The Sarah Nulty Power of Music Foundation. She also photographs for a theatre company.



Darren D. Danahy

D.D. Danahy (Darren Douglas Danahy) grew up the youngest of nine siblings, all huge music fans and half of which are musicians. This set the stage for a lifelong obsession with music and everything connected to it. Apart from writing about music, Darren also records and performs with a number of bands in different musical genres.



Mike Palin

Mike is passionate about music, and is a big fan of Empathy Test and plenty more. He prefers the smaller gigs to arenas. Mike will give virtually any music a listen, and loves stumbling across new bands/music. He would ideally like to pick five bands and organise a gig! Never say never, Mike!

Contributors & Thanks

Thanks to our team of writers and contributors including Jon Aanensen, Mark Buckley, Electronic Café, Simon Heavisides, Eoghan Lyng, Steven Swaby and Gary Watts.

Thanks also to Stephano Barberis, Kevin Cummins, Danny Gerrard, Sam Giannini, Ken Harrison, Stefan Herwig, Morgan King, William Larnach-Jones, Chris Latham, Gary Levermore, Joe McKechnie, Steve Malins, Zoe Miller, Anna Ovenden, Mark Reeder, Scott Steele, Julian Stockton, Holly Turton, Claire Wheeler and Andy Woods.

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WELCOME

Another issue... that came around rather quickly! We have had amazing feedback on the last magazine with John Lydon on the cover, thank you. Competition entries are buzzing with enthusiasm, and we have more giveaways in this issue! We have also had lots of positivity from our Readers Think Tank initiative, keep those ideas coming! You're probably wondering what we have for you in this issue...

Kicking off issue 20 with a WORLD EXCLUSIVE featuring the iconic Hazel O'Connor, who is our cover girl too. Hazel sadly suffered a medical emergency in January 2022 and this is her first interview in three years. Hazel opens up about her rehabilitation and progress. We talked to the Coventry Music Museum and The 2-Tone Village about the importance of Coventry to the 2-Tone and SKA movement. Andy Bell talks about his new album Ten Crowns. We spoke to Steve Hovington on rediscovering the lost B-Movie debut album. We have interviews with Lene Lovich, Dick Witts of The Passage, and Steve Jansen on Japan and Exit North. Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook reminisce about Squeeze and our man in Berlin, Mark Reeder, continues his fascinating story.

Marc Massive walks us through the Leigh Bowery! Exhibition at the Tate Modern, and we focus on Delia Derbyshire and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. Gig reviews include Alison Moyet, Jeff Wayne's The War of The Worlds, Kim Wilde, TWIN NOIR and Pete Dinklage and the Mighty Wah! and we have more album and EP reviews than ever before!

Blitzed are delighted to welcome the very popular 1980s synthpop and Erasure aficionado Richard Evans into the Editorial Team to give his unique and highly interesting perspective.

Blitzed is venturing across the pond from our July issue, extending our reach into the USA with our new distribution partnership with Barnes and Noble, making the printed magazine now easily accessible in the United States.

So here we go into issue 20!

Kurt and Bridget

Editors

editor@blitzedmag.com



TWIN NOIR / Photo: Michael Fiedler

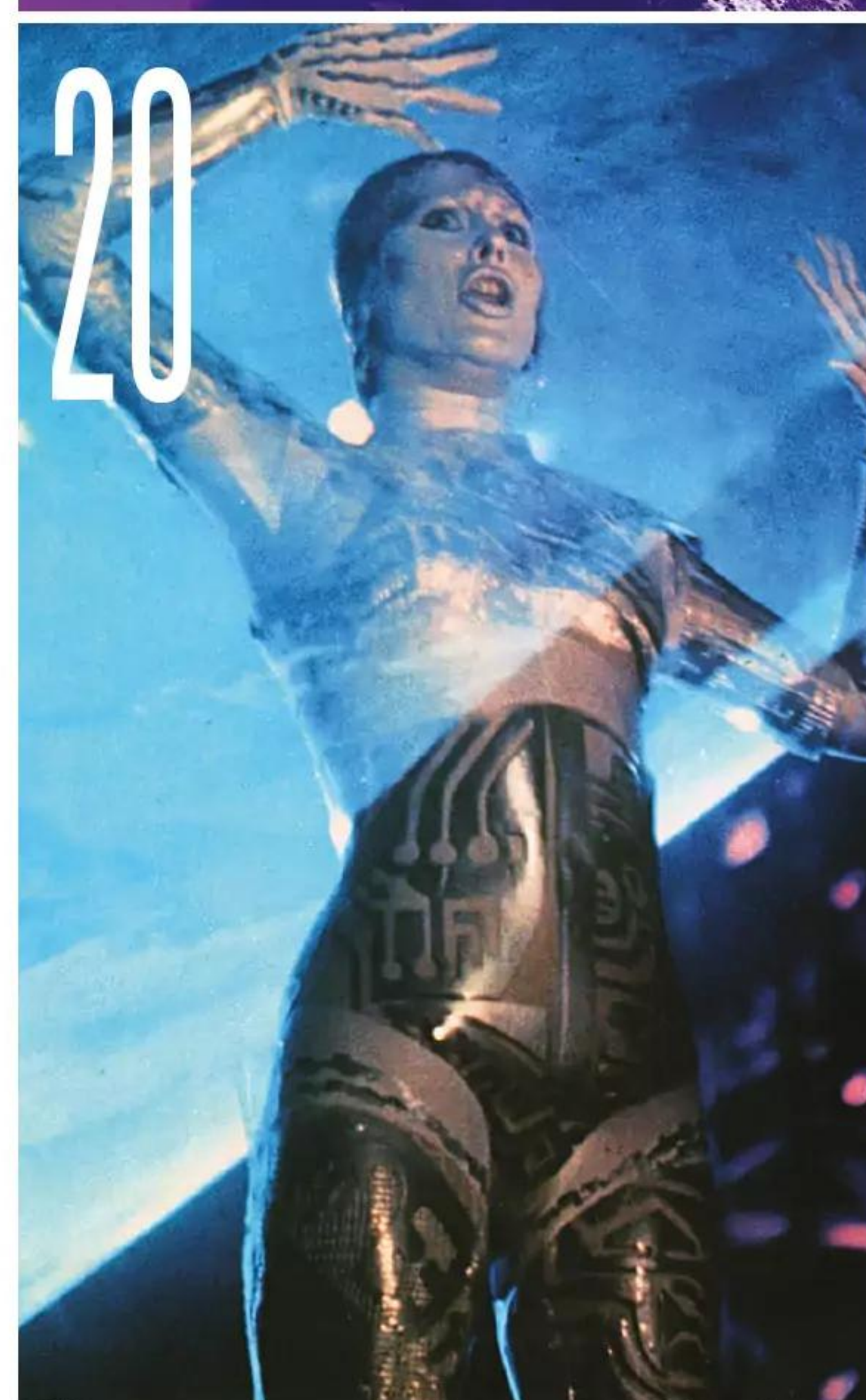
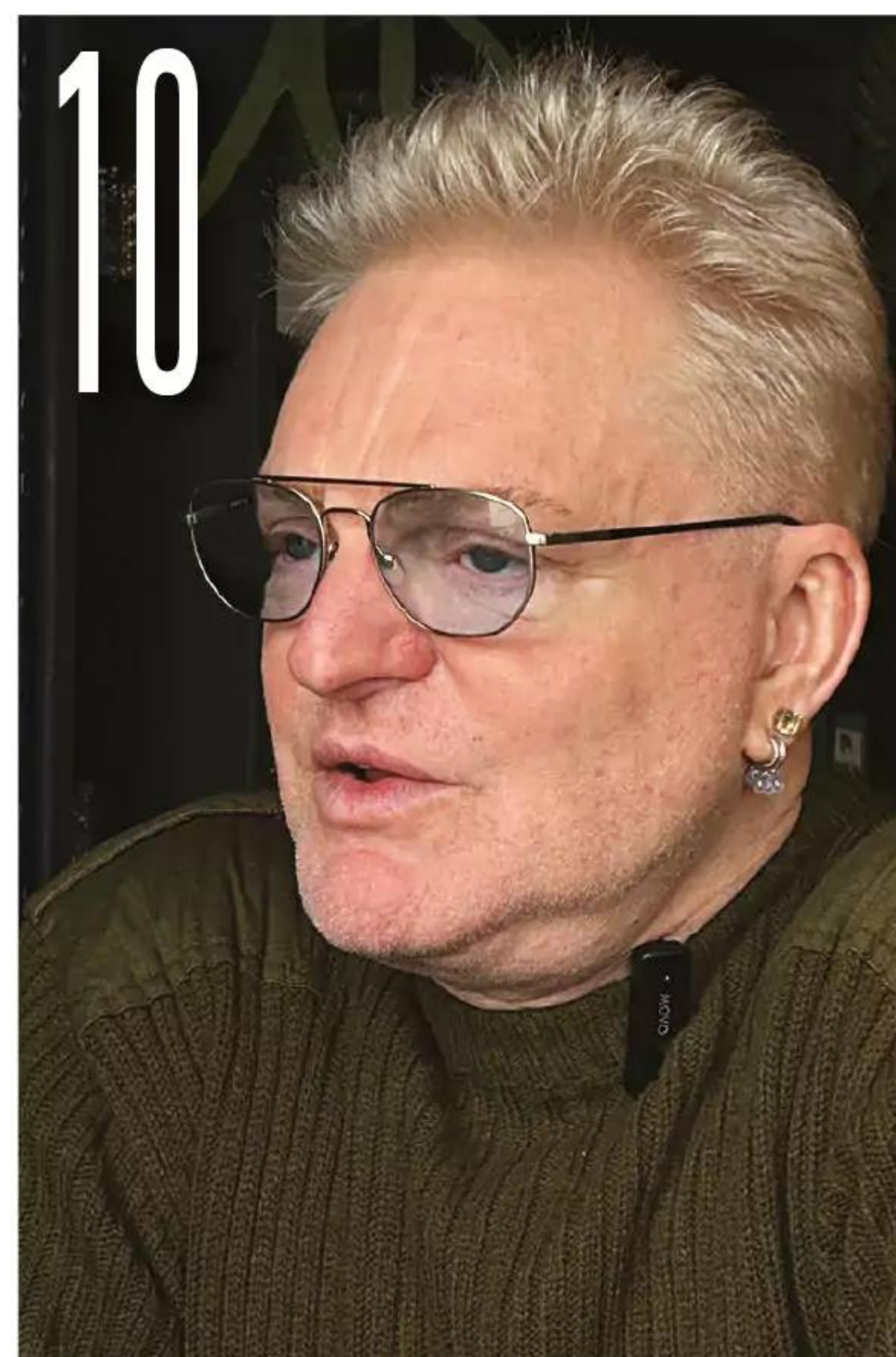
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**SUN 18 MAY
MANCHESTER** O2 RITZ

**WED 21 MAY
NEWCASTLE** O2 CITY HALL

**THU 29 MAY
OXFORD** O2 ACADEMY

**FRI 30 MAY
BRISTOL** O2 ACADEMY

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 Sat 25 Oct **LIVERPOOL** O₂ ACADEMY
 Sat 01 Nov **MANCHESTER** O₂ RITZ
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 SAT 24 JAN MANCHESTER O₂ RITZ
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NATURE OF WIRES

Beat:Cancer & Church of Madness are back at Facebar, Reading on Sat 17th May 2025. Four bands will be making an appearance, namely Beinaheleidenschaftsgegenstand (Beine for short), Still Forever, Witch of the Vale and the original lineup of Nature of Wires. NoW's Andrew Stirling Brown, Gary Watts and Tim Powell-Tuck are coming out of retirement to support one of their favourite charities, for whom they have performed in the past. Following the loss of Gary's cousin in 2023 and, after several attempts to coax NoW back onto stage, the timing is right to make a return. www.beatcancer.info/product/reading-may-2025/



KIFFIE RELEASES 20TH ALBUM APPROACHING THE HORIZON

Norwich-based electronic music artist KIFFIE has released his 20th

studio album entitled **Approaching the Horizon**, a deep exploration of physics and love.

The album contains 10 tracks, made predominantly on the Roland Boutique JX-08 and is an evolution of his sound and also a demonstration of how his production techniques have evolved over the last few years. The album will be available on Vinyl, CD and Digital download, and will be reviewed in our July issue.

GET YOURS AT: kiffie.bandcamp.com and elasticstage.com/kiffie

DURAN DURAN NEW PERFUMES

Luxury Italian perfume house Xerjoff have collaborated with British music icons Duran Duran to present two new unisex perfumes 'Black Moonlight' and 'NeoRio'. Xerjoff focuses heavily on originality and creativity in its products and marketing, which is a perfect fit with the band. The perfume collection coincides with Duran Duran's eagerly awaited stadium tour. **Available now worldwide.**



40TH ANNIVERSARY RE-ISSUE OF PURPLE RAIN

NPG Records and Paisley Park Enterprises, in partnership with Warner Records, are pleased to announce the release of a brand-new audiophile Blu-ray featuring 2024's Dolby Atmos mix of **Prince and the Revolution's** iconic 1984 album, **Purple Rain**, as well as Prince's original 1984 stereo mix, in high definition 24bit / 96kHz audio.

The Blu-ray will be available on sale on April 25th.

AVAILABLE TO ORDER NOW HERE: www.prince.lnk.to/PR40-BR



PULP TOUR NEWS

Tickets for the Pulp 2025 UK tour are now on general sale. The band are excited about playing live in new venues that they've never visited before.

7 June - Glasgow OVO Hydro, 10 June - Dublin

3Arena, 13 June - London The O2, 14 June - London The O2, 19 June - Birmingham

Utilita Arena, 21 June - Manchester Co-op Live, 25 July - Sheffield Tramlines

BUY TICKETS FROM: <https://tix.to/PULP2025>



HEAVEN 17 SOUND WITH VISION TOUR 2025

HEAVEN 17 ANNOUNCE UK 'SOUND WITH VISION TOUR' IN 2025

Sheffield's pioneering synthpop act Heaven 17 have announced dates for their November 2025 UK tour to include venues at London, Bexhill, Norwich, Oxford,

Leeds, Glasgow, Sheffield, Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bristol, Bournemouth and Manchester. Tickets will sell fast.

BUY YOUR TICKETS AT: <https://tix.to/H17>

BLANCMANGE: EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED TOUR: USA & CANADA

No more room down there, things fall into place as Blancmange are set to cause waves in the USA and Canada on tour this May...

17th May: Pasadena – Cruel World Festival, 18th

May: San Francisco – The Chapel,

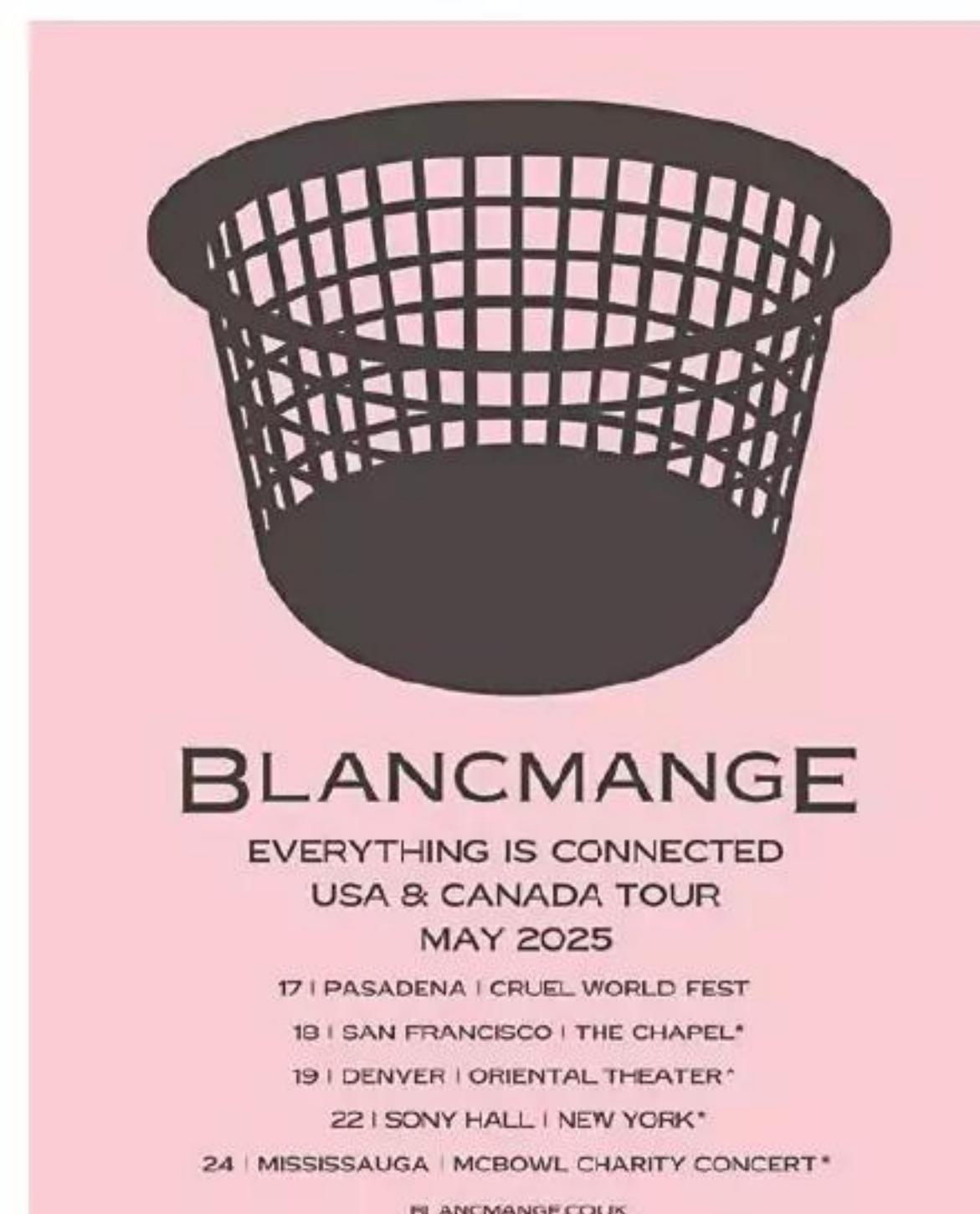
19th May: Denver – Oriental Theater, 22nd May –

New York – Sony Hall,

24th May – MCBOWL – Mississauga

MORE INFORMATION FROM:

www.blancmange.co.uk



BIRMINGHAM ELECTRIC

credit Tony C. Silva



Birmingham Electric's 'Able Archer', produced by Malcolm Holmes, and featuring the legendary Peter Hook on bass guitar, is the first release from the upcoming album Terra Incognita. Coming soon, the video was filmed in two decommissioned silos – the Titan Missile Museum, perfectly preserved (minus the 9 megaton nuclear warhead) and a privately owned site – accessible only by scaffold, near Tucson, Arizona, (USA), conveys the premise of the song in traditional MTV-era storytelling, a “push the button” scenario which falls in line with Andy Evans’ penchant for putting music and catchy lyrics to uncomfortable socio-political issues. Set in an imaginary universe where Andy and Lori Evans hold the future in their key-turning hands, viewers will catch glimpses of areas of the silo which are off-limits to museum visitors – including the 110-foot deep Level 7 of the launch duct, where Birmingham Electric makes history of their own by claiming the privilege of shooting the very first authorised music video at this location. (by Mae De Agua)

GLENN TILBROOK SOLO SHOWS

Squeeze frontman GLENN TILBROOK IS coming to both BARNESLEY – Birdwell on Friday 16th May and CHESTER – Live Rooms on Thursday 22nd May.

TICKETS FROM: www.thegigcartel.com/Artists-profiles/Glenn-Tilbrook.htm



CLEM BURKE, BLONDIE. R.I.P.



The music world is a little darker following the announcement on 7th April by American new wave trailblazers Blondie, relating to drummer Clem Burke: “It is with profound sadness that we relay news of the passing of our beloved friend and bandmate Clem Burke following a private battle with cancer. Clem was not just a drummer; he was the heartbeat of Blondie. His talent, energy, and passion for music were unmatched, and his contributions to our sound and success are immeasurable. Clem was a source of inspiration both on and off the stage. We extend our deepest condolences to Clem’s family, friends, and fans around the world...”

Debbie, Chris, and the entire Blondie family.

BLITZED QUOTES

Steve Hovington, B-Movie

“We were never a synthpop band. We were a rock band that used synths, but we had a new wave attitude. I just remember being very surprised that the label chose ‘Remembrance Day’ as the first single because I thought it was a bit too gloomy.”

Dick Witts, The Passage

“I was looking for aural energy, and that’s where I found it. But a lot of the punk scene was fraudulent and cosmetic. The post-punk scene was quite different in its width, depth and subject matter.”

Steve Jansen, Japan

“At 17, most people my age and of my background were a little lost for direction, but for the next 5 years I was fortunate enough to be in the recording studios, rehearsals rooms or touring. This was my apprenticeship and defined my expectations about the work I do.”

Neil Arthur, Blancmange

“For the Irene and Mavis EP back cover, Stephen wrote all the credits on the wall of the flat he was living in, then a friend of ours, Robert Carter, took the photograph. As he took the photograph, I threw the cat into the picture.”

John Lydon

“An audience is a very demanding thing. They’ll grab hold of you, and they won’t let go of that vision of you. You can’t live your life according to somebody else’s illusions about you. You just can’t. You’ve got to be true to yourself.”

Peter Murphy

“I am a recluse and so nicely out of touch that my radar is as archaic as it gets. This keeps me fresh, I hope, although at great risk of dislocation and so out of touch that I could disappear at any moment. It’s what I like.”

Stephen Duffy

“I remember being in a club and hearing ‘Planet Earth’ and feeling pleased for them. I can honestly say I didn’t feel any sort of jealousy. And I felt very pleased that Duran Duran had actually done what they set out to do. They’re nice people.”

Hazel O’Connor

“At five in the morning I’m woken up by George Michael again at my window going ‘Hazel, open the door’. When I did the poor man was soaking wet and it wasn’t raining. He’d rang my neighbour’s bell several times so she’d gone to her bathroom and poured a bucket of water over his head.”

HAIRCUT ONE HUNDRED NEW ALBUM ON THE WAY

Haircut One Hundred are preparing to unleash their long-awaited new album in the Summer of 2025. If you can't wait, here is a sneak peek of what to expect:

<https://link.haircut100.com/plum>



STREAM THE MUSIC FROM BLITZED MAGAZINE

The Blitzed Magazine Playlist on Spotify is the place where you can stream music from the artists featured in the magazine. Perfect listening when you are reading the amazing features, interviews, reviews and news. Scan the QR code and treat your ears!



PET SHOP BOYS DREAMWORLD TOUR

Pet Shop Boys are pleased to announce more festival dates in Spain for their Dreamworld 2025 tour this summer... in Seville on 17th June, Marbella on 16th July and Benidorm on 25th July. In the UK you can catch them at Cardiff Castle on 31st July, Hardwick Live Festival in County Durham on 16th August, and Warwick Castle on 30th August.

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM: www.petshopboys.co.uk/tour



MADNESS 'HIT PARADE' UK TOUR

Tickets are now on sale for the Madness Xmas spectacular tour - The Hit Parade. Expect a festival of music, mischief and mayhem as nutty boys Madness tour cities around the UK performing their greatest hits, ably supported by Squeeze. <https://lnk.to/Madness2025>



TONY HADLEY BIG BAND TOUR 2025

Ex-Spandau Ballet frontman Tony Hadley has announced his Big Band Tour this November through December, taking in cities such as Glasgow, London, Liverpool, Bristol, Portsmouth, Manchester, Nottingham and Birmingham. Expect to hear Tony performing big band and swing classics plus some of Spandau's biggest hits too.

TICKETS FROM: tonyhadley.lnk.to/livedates



BUDGIE BOOK AND TOUR DATES

Following the news that legendary punk & postpunk royalty, musician & drummer extraordinaire Peter Budgie Clarke will be releasing his memoirs via the forthcoming biography, 'The Absence: Memoirs of a Banshee Drummer' (released in June)

<https://bit.ly/4gwMWN1> comes the news that Budgie will be launching the project via a UK book tour in July. Dates & venues will be announced here: www.facebook.com/budgieofficial



THE BRIT FEST 2025 – BIGGER, BETTER, AND BACK THIS SUMMER!



The Brit Fest 2025 is back and bigger than ever, returning to Ashley Hall Showground, Altrincham from 4th to 6th July 2025. With a star-studded line up, expanded entertainment, and exciting new features, this year's festival promises to be the ultimate celebration of live music and family fun. Artists include Razorlight, UB40 ft Ali Campbell, 10cc, Midge Ure, Tom Bailey of Thompson Twins, Toploader, Republica, Let Loose and more.

MORE INFORMATION: www.thebritfest.co.uk/line-up

BIRMINGHAM NIGHTCLUB FOR NEW ROMANTICS

TRANSMISSION club night in Birmingham is a regular celebration of music and lifestyle from the Blitz Club and Birmingham's own Rum Runner. Like-minded New Romantics dance to New Wave, Glam Rock, Punk, Electronic/ Synth pop and Alternative music from the 1980s. Transmission is run by music lovers and features artists such as David Bowie, Roxy Music, Kraftwerk, Human League, Heaven 17, Japan, Ultravox, Sex Pistols, Simple Minds, Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, Visage, T Rex, OMD, Depeche Mode and many others. Amazing music and also seven large screens displaying artists' videos from the day. The dress code is 'All individual styles Welcome!'

TRANSMISSION dates for 2025: 21st June, 26th July, 6th September, 18th October, 29th November. All events take place at Hennessey's, Digbeth, B5 5TJ

INFORMATION: www.instagram.com/transmission_club_night

CLAUDIA BRÜCKEN NEW ALBUM ON THE WAY



Demon Music Group are delighted to confirm the release on 4th July of 'Night Mirror' – Claudia Brücken's fourth solo album. Written and recorded in London between 2023-2025 with long-time collaborator John Williams (The Housemartins, Alison Moyet, Blancmange, Simple Minds), 'Night Mirror' is an enthralling collection of 10 original

compositions, an intense, intoxicating series of mysteries, reflections, struggles and obsessive observations set against a backdrop of sleek, elegant electronica. For fans, it's a Claudia you know, and one you don't yet know. For newcomers, 'Night Mirror' is an introduction to her voice and songs as special as any album she has made. Available as a single CD, single LP, double CD with exclusive mixes, a double LP with 'Nighttime Mixes', Blu Ray Audio (Atmos, 5.1, Stereo and Binaural Mixes, Digital Standard 10-track album (in Stereo and Spatial), and more.

AVAILABLE FOR PRE-ORDER NOW www.claudiabrucken.lnk.to/nightmirror

SPARKS ANNOUNCE FURTHER TOUR DATES

Sparks announce extra dates on their MAD! tour which kicks off in Japan on June 8. The European leg of their world tour will now include 2 shows at Dublin's National Stadium on July 15 and 16 before the band return to the UK for a date at Edinburgh Playhouse on July 18, ending at Wolverhampton's The Halls on July 19. North American dates will be announced soon. Released in May 2025 on new label home Transgressive Records, the new Sparks album MAD! finds Ron and Russell examining cultural phenomena such as branded backpacks, tattoos, performative devotion (whether to a God, a lover, a celebrity or a sports team), the hegemony of banter, and the rise of influencers. MAD! is a modern record, which belongs in, and speaks to, the modern world. Which is all the more remarkable when you consider the vintage of its creators.

SPARKS TOUR TICKETS AND MUSIC: www.allsparks.com



INANE RAMBLINGS FROM A GRATEFUL IDIOT

1980s synthpop soloist Nik Kershaw hit chart success with a string of global singles including 'Wouldn't it Be Good', 'The Riddle' and 'I Won't Let the Sun Go Down on Me'.

Nik's new book will reveal the stories and muses behind his greatest hits. Pre-orders are being taken now for 'Musing & Lyrics: Inane Ramblings from a Grateful Idiot'.

The strictly limited-edition signed books feature insights into Nik's global

hits and, as fans would expect, Nik's narrative is full of dry wit and self-deprecating humour.

The book release coincides with his autumn spoken word tour 'An Intimate Evening of Songs, Stories and Silliness' – which kicks off on September 18th in Eastleigh and runs through to November 23rd in Monmouth.

More information from www.nikkershaw.net

BLITZED QUOTES

Andy McCluskey

"We have always been fascinated by that interface of humans and machinery. It's kind of 'our sound', if you like – that juxtaposition of mechanical patterns; machinery as a foil for the human emotion. We like to address those issues. 'La Mitrailleuse' has a specific reference to World War One, where we tragically witnessed the first mechanised slaughter of human beings."

Debbie Harry

"I think that people in general, whether they are male or female, who are inhibited by the clichés of what women are or what men are, really don't like themselves. Because personality traits are not necessarily sexual."

Rusty Egan

"Back then, we were all just young and silly airheads – none of us really knew anything, but we thought we knew everything. Basically, we were Kevin and Perry!"

Thomas Dolby

"I first did my live shows in the late 70's and in those days I had a boatload of equipment that always seemed to be going wrong."

Adam Ant

"It may be a coincidence, but from the minute I took anti-depressants, I didn't pick up a guitar or a pen for seven years."

Marco Pirroni

"What I really wanted was for kids to go into school and go 'Did you see that band, they were completely mad and I can't believe what I was watching' ... which was the effect that Roxy Music and Bowie had on me. You couldn't wait to get to school the next day and sort of tell them."

Boy George

"People are rarely as weird as you anticipate. Except for Courtney Love, who reminded me of that mad snake in 'The Jungle Book'."

Holly Johnson

"I like the idea of corrupting the youth of the nation. But I wasn't trying to be a role model. It was a laugh. You can have a laugh in your early 20s—you think you're gonna live forever."

Julian Cope

"Even when the songs are specific, as soon as you put them out into public domain, they lose their specifics. I shoot stars out to everybody that I know and everybody that I don't know. I just hope that I'm going to make those connections, and I do."



'BREAKING THRU THE INTERSTELLAR'

ANDY BELL INTERVIEW

By Bridget Gray and Kurt Sinclair-Hall

(c) Sean Black

Aside from being one half of Erasure, possibly the UK's most popular award-winning synthpop partnership, singer/songwriter Andy Bell also has a successful and varied solo career having released two albums under his own name, and a further two with his one-man theatre project, Torsten the Bareback Saint. Blitzed grabbed a couple of hours with Andy in East London, amid his busy schedule, to talk about his new solo album *Ten Crowns*.

Ten Crowns is your third solo studio album after 2005's *Electric Blue* and 2010's

Non-Stop. Why is 2025 the right time for solo album number three?

"I had all these tracks with Dave written, and it just seemed like the right time now, especially as Erasure is taking a little break."

Why did you choose to have the album produced in Nashville?

"It was purely because Dave had moved there, he upsized really. It's not as expensive as LA and he wanted somewhere to bring his children up safely. I think we had about four or five songs when we moved to Nashville, and then we wrote probably four or five more,

so he finished it off. He has been working non-stop, at least one remix per day – of everyone! Plus preparing the backing tracks for live shows and doing backing vocals. I was just sitting on the sofa and literally writing to the tracks and writing lyrics out as Dave was working on the music."

'*Aftermath (Here We Go)*' is one of our favourite tracks. It's great as fans of that song that you're working with Dave Audé again. How did that relationship come about?

"I think we met through Stephen [Moss] because he DJ'd a few times at Stephen's

// I've always been quite superstitious.



club, and he also got me to perform there one night. I wanted to spread my writing a bit, by writing with other people. We went straight to his house; he had a studio there. Back then, his kids were almost babies – now they're about 13/14 years old – and they were crying and banging on the window to get in the studio. I felt so bad, you know? But it was quite easy. I love playing dance music, and Dave's worked with so many people, and done remixes for everyone. He was a huge fan of [Erasure's] *Wild!*, that's his favourite album, so he'd always wanted to work with me. It's a good working relationship."

Tell us about the track 'Heart's A Liar' – that features the vocals of one of your idols, Debbie Harry – was that a dream come true for you?

"It really was a dream come true! It was written by this lovely lady Luciana Caparosa and her husband. We met each other in the studio, and it was going to be a duet with her, but she was doing other writing. She did a track with Betty White and then sort of left the music industry for a bit. So, I said 'would you mind if I rewrite the verse and leave the chorus as it is, but change the bridge?', and she was fine. We did a version and played it to her and asked her if she liked it, and she did like it. Then we said, 'OK guess what, we've managed to get Debbie Harry on that!' And she's as much of a fan as I am, she was kind of crying, she couldn't believe we'd got Debbie Harry on there. We can't wait until it comes out. It's a lovely track, and it's not what you would think."

Another track on the album, 'Lies So Deep' has supporting vocals from Chicago-based diva Sarah Potenza, is that

someone you knew before?

"It wasn't, no. I mean, I'd listened to Beth Ditto and I'd been in touch with Beth but then she was poorly, or she was working on something else, so I just thought OK, no worries. And then Dave suggested Sarah who was on *The Voice* in the US. She had a huge following and as soon as I heard her I thought 'oh my God, YES, this is exactly right'."

How did you decide which singles to release first from the album?

"We have a listening committee, and everybody says what they think are the best tracks. The first track ['Breaking Thru the Interstellar'] was a two-take vocal with just some rough written lyrics and it came out of nowhere, just an immediate singing for joy kind of thing."

The whole album sounds like you've enjoyed making it. You and Dave work well together and there is a real feeling of happiness and joy running through the production.

"Yes, and I love working with Dave. He's so committed to what he's doing. You can't sort of stop him, you know, he's at it constantly. I suppose it is quite happy, but at the same time I think the guns are drawn, like in 'Godspell', and it's all true..."

Can you tell us a bit about the beautiful video directed by our lovely mutual friend Stephano Barberis for the second single 'Don't Cha Know'? It looks very cold!

"Ohh. Yes, it was! Stephano wanted to work seriously with me for a long time. And we just kept putting him off as we didn't have the budget for it, or Vince doesn't like being in videos. We needed it to be something special, and what he did on 'Time (Hearts Full of Love)' was fantastic – that was just literally shot in our flat around the corner. Stephen had the idea of getting in touch with him and we flew up to Vancouver where he lives. We shot the whole day, and they were so patient. Stephano had all the ideas of what he wanted us to do. I was amazed with what he got in just that one day. The video location is in Vancouver. There's a channel in America called Hallmark Channel, which was named after the [greetings] cards, so they always have

these really Christmassy romantic looking sets. It's where they shoot the soap opera 'When Calls the Heart', it was a cowboy town with no electricity whatsoever. Cold!"

Award winning Canadian music video Director Stephano Barberis reveals more about working with Andy on the promotional video:

"I had to completely disconnect my brain from my heart and my soul to work with Andy, being the biggest Erasure fan since childhood. Your body goes into shock autopilot, then it wears off and you realise this is just a beautiful, creative, loving soul. When I first heard the song, it had a spiritual feeling for me. I felt like it was about needing to connect with something much larger than life... So, I thought maybe Andy is searching for something in this video. I had him walking through a bleak, post-apocalyptic world where everyone is gone, but I wanted it to look beautiful still; much like some natural disasters like forest fires have an odd, stark and tragic beauty to them inadvertently. The constantly obscuring 'fog' also was symbolic, like walking through mysterious clouds, not unlike faith itself. I wanted it to be pretty and cinematic."

We're big fans of Shiny Toy Guns, how did you come to have Sisely Treasure co-write 'Put Your Empathy On Ice'?

"That's Stephen's favourite band! Yeah, that was through Dave. I didn't realise they supported us in the US – I didn't realise who they were! Because her voice sounds so different on Stephen's favourite track of theirs – 'You Are The One'. I couldn't believe how punky she is. Dave played me this song of hers because it was very Erasure-ish. So, this song is about how our minds can't get really deeply involved with the online



From the Video for Don't Cha Know



Ten Crowns is quite happy, but at the same time I think the guns are drawn



world because it's just too awful so we have to cut ourselves off somewhat. I did a rewrite of the verse and the bridge. It sort of sounds a bit pastiche-y and David Bowie-ish and I thought that came out really well."

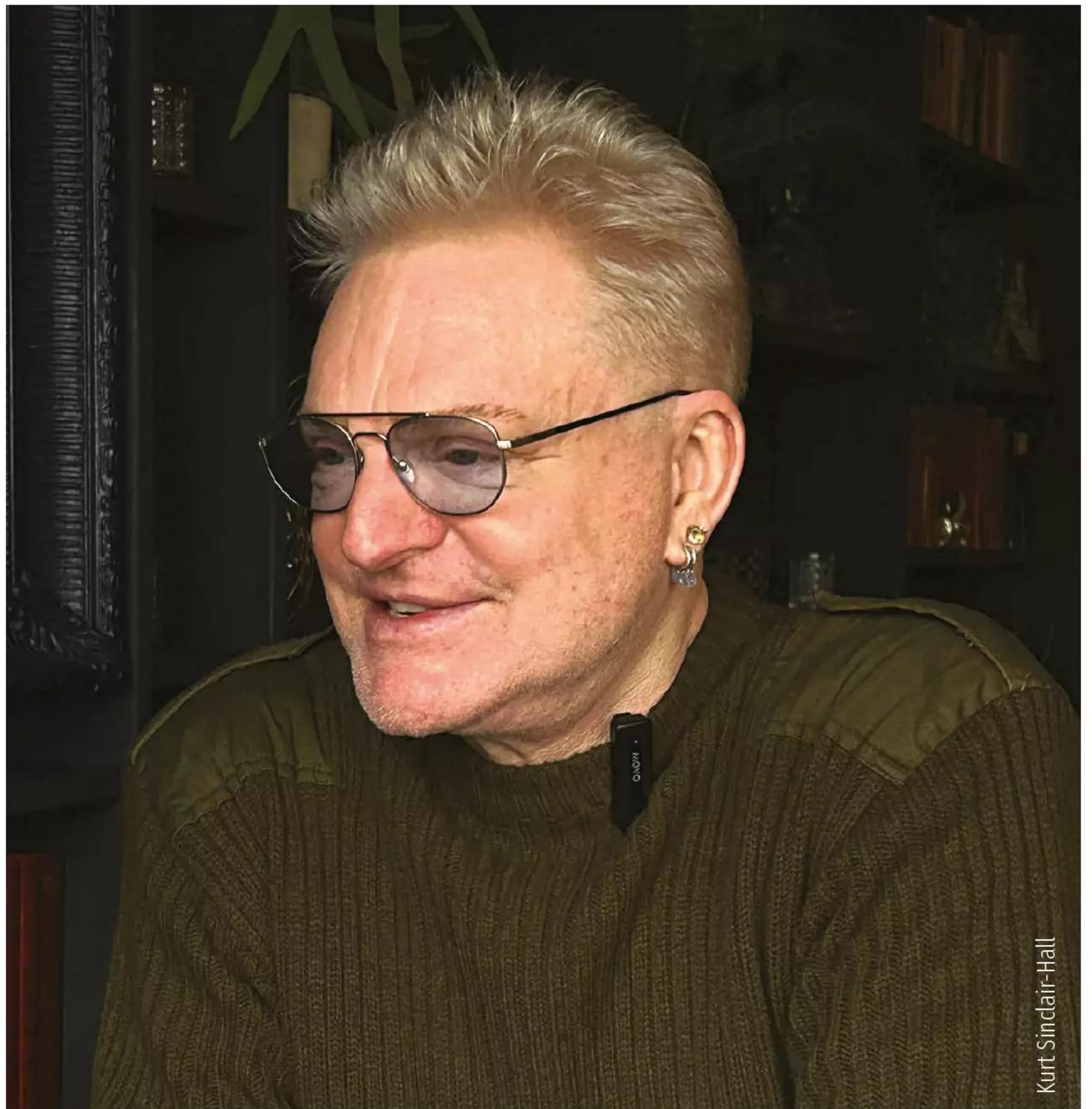
The album name, *Ten Crowns* has a Tarot connotation. Why did you choose that name and what does Tarot mean to you?

"I just love it because I've always been quite superstitious. My nan was really superstitious like 'don't put your new shoes on the table'. We're not from a travelling family or anything like that, but I just love things like reading tea leaves, so Tarot was a natural thing to go towards. Every time when we get stopped at the airport it's always my Tarot cards in my bag. I take them out and they say, 'oh can you do me one?'".

Are there any tracks on the album that are particularly personal/special to you?

"I love 'Thank You'. It just makes me cry, and of course 'Heart's A Liar'. We asked if Debbie Harry would be up for the idea of performing on a song, and she said yes. I said I would send over some songs, and sent them a few to choose from. She just clicked with 'Heart's A Liar'.

That was the one Debbie liked most, and I think she chose the correct one! I wrote all the lyrics out and then I only put instructions like 'can you please speak this part'. I like it when she does



Kurt Sindair-Hall

that 'pop talking', she talks quite a lot on her songs like 'Rip Her To Shreds'. It was that kind of vibe, and then joining in on the chorus, and that was it really. To be honest I'm still on a high."

The supporting UK tour for *Ten Crowns* starts on 1st May in York, and we'll see you in Birmingham on the 2nd. How different is it prepping for this tour than an Erasure tour, and will you be nervous?

"It's kind of different because we haven't done this material before. Dave will be there, we've got our whole band that we've been using for a while. Vince has seen us, we played in San Diego and he was there. It's kind of tricky picking which Erasure songs to put together with the new ones. It's a bit nerve wracking, I still get nervous, I can't help it. I don't really like playing in such big, huge venues because I like to see people. I like the smaller intimate gigs. We're doing a combination of tracks, a fair amount from the new album and one or two surprises. *Ten Crowns* was just about finished when Vince and I started working together on the new Erasure album,

and it's completely different. Erasure is much more personal, being with Vince. Although to me it's good just to see him and be with him and make sure he's safe. That's what's nice."

You have a very distinctive voice, yet it suits many different types of music – ballads, pop, dance, soul, and opera (and yes we do still listen to *The Fall of the House of Usher*). Do you have a favourite singing style?

"Oh, do you? Thank you. I just like singing really. I like it when you discover something about your body every time you do it. Because you connect with your heart so much every time you sing, it's a lucky profession to be born into and hopefully you're evolving that during your own lifetime and hope that comes out in your voice."

How is the writing going for the next Erasure record?

"It's fine so far. I mean there's nothing concrete, but we're just going to write as much as possible and take it from there and see what happens." ●

ANDY BELL TEN CROWNS

Crown Recordings

By Bridget Gray

Andy Bell releases the third solo album of his 40 year career, the majestic Ten Crowns, on his new label Crown Recordings which has been set up specifically as a home for this release. Co-written and produced by US Grammy-winning remixer, DJ and producer Dave Audé, the album contains ten joyous tracks, completed in the year Andy turned 60, inspired by gospel and the dancefloor.

This album is the archetype of a perfect pop record, with ten songs (the Ten Crowns if you will) and a total running time of around 40 minutes which fits perfectly within its multiple release formats. Available on CD, deluxe double CD, gold cassette, white vinyl, oxblood vinyl and limited edition picture disc vinyl, either separately or variously grouped into numerous bundles including T-shirts and Art Cards there is something here for everyone's taste and budget. A veritable smorgasbord for collectors to delight over!

In Andy's own words; "This album's about picking yourself up, dusting yourself off, embracing life – and about taking that feeling on even when you're fighting demons in the world, like homophobia, and fighting demons in yourself. It's about being celebratory and uplifting... The whole album is like asking for salvation, really, in a world where everybody ultimately wants to be loved."

As a longtime fervent fan of Erasure, and of Andy Bell and Vince Clarke's respective solo work, Andy's new solo album does not disappoint and it certainly hits the mark with regards to being uplifting and celebratory. It follows on, if not chronologically then at least aurally, from the Andy Bell / Dave Audé 2014 single 'Aftermath (Here We Go)' (ding ding ding) and 2016's 'True Original' both of which reached the top of the Billboard Dance Club charts in the US. Three Erasure albums subsequently followed before Andy was to release Ten Crowns.

So far, Andy has shared three tracks from the new album across social media



platforms and YouTube starting with the dancefloor stomper and album's opening track 'Breaking Thru The Interstellar', which grabs you by the ears and utterly epitomises the trademark Bell/Audé sound, the sublime BBC Radio 2 playlisted track 'Don't Cha Know' (with accompanying magnificent video) and more recently the radio edit of 'Dance For Mercy' a song about reconnecting with your time on earth, and which uses the bassline from Sheila and B. Devotion's 'Spacer' as its foundation.

Joining Andy on the middle-eight of 'Lies So Deep', about the intensity of heartbreak, is US powerhouse and Audé collaborator Sarah Potenza, with shades of Adele and Stevie Nicks. Also featuring on the album is Andy's inspiration and pop heroine Debbie Harry who duets with Andy on the wistful 'Heart's A Liar', a rewrite of a song by English-Italian songwriter Luciana.

Tracks such as 'Godspell' contain some deep vitriol in lyrics such as "Get thee behind me, charlatan! Get thee behind me, sycophant! Get thee behind me, false prophet!" softened somewhat by being followed by Andy's trademark 'woah' vocal. And I defy anyone not to dance (or at least do a little chair boogie) to the epic glittering synthpop vibes of 'Put Your

Empathy On Ice'. A perfectly observed commentary on the modern condition with its driving beat, divine melody and lush harmonies, including a chorus written by Sisely Treasure of American rock band Shiny Toy Guns, juxtaposed with satirical lyrics about today's online world; "put your money where your mouth is, no time for white lies, just Put Your Empathy On Ice"

The record was produced in Nashville, and gospel influences are abundant throughout, especially on the closing track 'Thank You'. A heartfelt low tempo ballad, a 'euphoric funeral song' which concludes with a beautiful gospel choir refrain, perfectly closing the album. Lyrically, this album makes you feel uplifted, moved, outraged, and soothed in equal measure, all encased in glittery, foot stomping dance beats and incredible high quality production.

I mentioned previously that at around 40 minutes, it's the perfect 'pop record' length. It's also the perfect length to put it on repeat and play it again, and again, and again... ●

Ten Crowns is available from the usual online retailers including Andy's official online store at Townsend Music, www.andybell.tnstor.es



'STUPID CONVERSATION' NIGEL BATES INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

HaHa Hats is a fascinating collective of eclectic music and mischief, fronted by the synth-bashing, singing band-leader-in-a-bowler, Nigel Bates, aided and abetted by his bass guitar-wielding son Perry, and the flamboyant Rachael on backing vocals. With the release of their latest album AARGH getting a welcome reception from all corners, Blitzed pinned down Nigel on a warm and sunny Sunday lunchtime to get the lowdown on what makes this Brummie band tick.

When did you first become interested in making music?

"In 1978-79 I can remember lying in bed and my dad had bought me this little

green transistor radio. It was in the shape of an Action Man tank type of thing. It sat on the side of my bed, and I can remember to this day hearing the start of Blondie's 'Heart of Glass'. It was that CR-78 sound for some reason that really struck a chord. I'd listened to the radio every night, but nothing had ever really struck until that moment. I remember hearing 'Are 'Friends' Electric?' for the first time, and it was just those sounds we'd just never heard before. I remember Dad saying, "God, that's a dirgey song, isn't?", which made me like it even more."

Tell us about your journey as a musician leading up to HaHa Hats.

"I had the very first Ultravox album,

then I got into some David Bowie albums. And then I got into bands like Aztec Camera. I bought an acoustic guitar and was rubbish at playing the guitar. I then bought an electric guitar and was rubbish at playing that. I started a band with my mate who lived around the corner. He was into electronics, and he bought a synthesiser. And then I bought a synthesiser. But I was always into songwriting rather than being able to play. I was never a musician, but I always wanted to write songs."

So how and when did HaHa Hats become a band?

"I think it was about seven years ago. I had stopped doing music for about 10

years when the kids were young, it just wasn't easy with kids. I went to a music shop with my oldest son, Perry, to buy him a new bass and then bought myself an acoustic guitar, because there was a really good deal on. Then I started writing again and Perry bought a little Boss digital recording studio. He was able to digitally record lots of tracks. I thought, "Blimey, I've not seen that before. I can write songs on that". Suddenly it was so much easier to be creative, so much easier to write. So, when I started writing again and putting songs out, Perry started playing along to them. He was in his own band at the time with Rachael. They did the circuit, but it came to an end. Rachael started doing some backing singing and so she came more on board. I just carried on writing. And then when the streaming thing came out and we could put music online, I started putting more and more out there. Perry and Rachael said, "let's do some gigs together". And I said, "well, if we're going to do it, I want to try and make it at least a creative process". Nobody wants to watch a bald old bloke stand on the stage with a synth. So we came up with a few lights and costumes and props and things like that, just to make it exciting."

What's it like being in a band with your son?

"It's great, we don't clash, he's very good really. There's a lot of "oh dad, that's terrible". He does get annoyed with me because I'm not very technical. We did a gig at the Jam House in Birmingham a few weeks ago and I bought this Stylophone theremin. I think I must have been the first person ever in the country to use it live, like an idiot. So we started off the first track and it went OK. And then the next track it just went bonkers and was making all these random noises and I didn't know what it was doing. I just couldn't turn it off! I could have destroyed the whole audience's ears then. It's a great little unit, but we won't be using that again."

How would you describe the music and vibe of HaHa Hats?

"Warped pop music. Yeah, I think that's a fair description, it is quite an eclectic structure for a band and what we do does crossover a lot of genres. Some of

it is electronic, but there's many tracks without any electronics on it."

Tell us about your life away from the band. What fills your time?

"Well, my main job is running the Artifex Art Gallery, I've done that for the last 30 odd years. We sell paintings, craft, jewellery, sculptures, furniture. And I love it. It's an interesting job and the customers are great. My business partner and I started the gallery in 1997. We were both into making things. Unusually at the time perhaps, he was into contemporary art and contemporary furniture, when everybody at that time was into antiques and rustic furniture, and there was no gallery anywhere near us. People thought they were mad to

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Nobody wants to watch a bald old bloke with a synth

//

start a gallery, because nobody really saw that type of stuff around here. It was before IKEA, so the most contemporary thing at the time would be something like Habitat. We try to support British artists where some passion has gone into it. It's a flexible space too, we do lots of things

there. We have put on lots of different exhibitions, sculpture exhibitions, outdoor exhibitions, furniture shows, we put music gigs on in, readings in there. It's hard work, but the job is great, and I get to exhibit my own paintings."

Tell us of your supportive charities, in particular Teenage Cancer Trust. Can you tell us about your involvement and what it means to you?

"My other son Spencer broke his arm when he was 16, playing with his mates. He went to the hospital, they put him in a cast, same as any other kid. Four or five months later, it wasn't healing, so they put it in another cast, but it still wouldn't heal, and he was in a lot of pain. They did a scan on it, and they found out that he got a sarcoma tumour in his arm, and it was a large tumour. He had to have chemotherapy for the next nine months to see if they could get this tumour down to a size where they could take it out. Because he was young, he had the strongest chemo that you could possibly get. So he was very, very ill and we spent most of our time in the hospital and the ward that he was on, which was supported by the Teenage Cancer Trust. As you can imagine, they're all youngsters in there. The Trust put in a room which was like a kitchen and somewhere for them to go. They put teenage essential things in like Wi-Fi, you know, televisions... they spent months in these rooms and without all that, you can imagine a teenager would go round the bend. And they do that in lots of hospitals. Anyhow, once Spencer had finished all his treatment, they did a scan, and they found the tumour wasn't



Credit Penny Burgess



Warped pop music, that's a fair description



small enough to remove and so the safest thing was to amputate his arm. After the surgery, there were another six months of chemo, because they wanted to stop it spreading. Teenage Cancer Trust supported us all through that. So, we thought we've just got to give something back. When it was all finished, we put on a big festival at the gallery, and we had 1000 people down. We had all these musicians come down and play. Gordon Giltrap came down and played and we raised lots of money for the Teenage Cancer Trust. And we've done bits for them ever since. It's not a high-profile charity as such, but they go on working under the radar doing an amazing job."

So you and your Artifex Gallery are planning a secret charity music project in partnership with Blitzed magazine. We can't say too much now, but are you excited about it?

"Yeah, as you say, it's secret at the moment, in the planning stages, but it's a great idea. Between us, we have come up with a fantastic project that combines music, art and celebrities that will benefit two incredible charities. It's a clever concept and it's going to be immense."

You have a very fine new album out called AARGH. What's your favourite HaHa Hats track on the album?

"I think my favourite track at the moment is 'Stupid Conversation' because I was really pleased with the arrangement of it. In the gallery we get lots of couples come in and they want to buy a picture or buy a book or something, and there's many times that they don't agree. And they have many colourful arty conversations about whether they should have it or not. This is going on

between this couple and he just turned around and said "oh this is a stupid conversation". And I thought that's what I do all day. And it is a stupid conversation. The song also references Pauline Boty and Lee Miller. Pauline was an artist, feminist, actor and co-founder of the British Pop Art movement. She was at Slade School of Fine Art with Peter Blake and David Hockney, and unfortunately got completely sidetracked by the other guys. Her life unfolds into a truly tragic story. When she died people realised all her paintings had disappeared and no one knew what happened to them until they were discovered thirty years later, and they're worth millions now. And then Lee Miller, a photographer and fashion model, and correspondent for Vogue during World War II. Another strong, proud and passionate woman. I put all of these elements in the pot, and it just worked first time."

The new album title, AARGH ... What does it mean?

"The idea is that it's not really a word, it's a sound and everybody says it differently. I like the way it can either be a shout, or it can be a gentle "Aaah". Or you could be banging your finger with a hammer. And I thought it looked good as well. I was quite surprised no one had thought of it before."

Are you happy with the way that the album has been received?

"I can't say there's millions of people who have actually listened to it. But everyone seems to enjoy it. There was no deadline to complete the album, in fact it was actually you guys at Blitzed saying you want to put something in the magazine to help promotion that made me decide, "Right, I've really got to finish this". Other than that, there was nobody breathing down my neck. There's probably 8 to 10 songs that could have gone on there that haven't made the cut. But yes, I am very happy with the comments and opinions we have heard about the album."

What's next for you then?

"I have been working on a lot of new stuff for another project, which I hope to have out very soon and also planning some gigs, including one with a Czech Eurovision Song Contest finalist for some bizarre reason. The actual album launch party is on June 21st in Birmingham, watch out for that one, it's going to be fun." ●

AARGH is available on digital platforms (including Spotify and hahahats1.bandcamp.com)





'CLEAR AS CRYSTAL'

DICK WITTS —

THE PASSAGE

INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Copyright BBC



A sharp-minded and somewhat intriguing new wave group from Manchester, The Passage were actively recording and performing in chameleonic form between 1978 and 1983. Frontman Richard 'Dick' Witts, previously a percussionist in the City's much celebrated Hallé Orchestra, brought a fascinating and diverse musical knowledge that undoubtedly shaped the sound of The Passage, merging analogue synthesiser soundscapes with layered percussion, edgy guitar, and penetrating lyrics. In January 1979 Paul Morley wrote a lengthy piece for NME, promoting the three best new bands from Manchester: Spherical Objects, Joy Division and The Passage.

After a handful of dates in Manchester and the North-West, including, notably, a show at Eric's in Liverpool with Joy Division in support, in 1978 The Passage recorded their first single

for the Object Music label entitled 'Love Song', and despite somewhat uncompromising lyrics, notched up healthy sales of 3,000 copies. The band developed their sound toward dance and electronica on future albums for Cherry Red, Degenerates and Enflame, and should have charted a hit with their single 'XOYO' in 1982. Witts juggled a post as music and dance officer for Merseyside Arts Association with co-presenting What's On for Granada TV courtesy of Factory Records supremo Tony Wilson, before moving on to front The Oxford Roadshow and broadcasting for BBC Radio. Blitzed were fortunate to speak to Passage kingpin Dick Witts and find out more about this enigmatic band that helped fix Manchester at the heart of uber-cool new wave music in the UK.

When did you first discover you had a passion for making music?

"Listening to music. At home we had a radiogram - a radio that plays records. My grandma's best friend was the famous soprano Elsie Suddaby, and we would listen out for her on BBC Radio. My Auntie Jean loved musicals; my favourite record in her collection was West Side Story, which was considered very modern."

What music influenced you when you were growing up in Lincolnshire?

"At school there was an old cello in a cupboard which I was allocated even though my arms were too short for it. Later an ambulance driver, Mr. Brooks, gave percussion lessons at the local girls' grammar school, and I paid sixpence a session to learn drum kit and orchestral percussion. Then I joined the local brass band and youth orchestras. John Cale of The Velvet Underground told me a similar story; for a time he was principal viola of the Welsh National Youth Orchestra."

I played drums in working men's clubs (underage) and a strange business called Palm Court Bingo, where a trio of us played light music on a revolving stage in between games of bingo. That did wonders for my sight-reading."

What were you doing musically before you became part of The Passage?

"I helped out with The Fall in the early days of the Manchester Musicians' Collective, and before that in the early 1970s, I played in a range of improvisation groups. There were at least two ensembles: Dreamtiger and The Option Band. We played posh concert halls in Belgium, France, Switzerland - good rehearsal for touring in a post-punk band! I also got odd jobs: I duetted on vibraphone with Maurice Gibb of The Bee Gees; I was a V-Man Latin percussionist for crooner Frankie Vaughan; I was the hands of Shakin' Stevens playing the piano in his 'Green Door' video."

The Hallé Orchestra was one of the world's top symphony orchestras and, fortunately, based in Manchester. Tell us about your involvement with them and balancing that with post-punk interests.

"At the time the orchestra was looking for a replacement for its celebrated conductor, Sir John Barbirolli, and, like some players there he had drink problems, similar to rock stars. I was young when I started to get jobs as a percussionist with the Hallé, the second youngest on stage, and it was very regimented. But you were set on playing your very best in front of 3,000 people. You might say that the Collective scene and the post-punk scene were the opposites of what the Hallé had to offer Mancunians. When Manchester came alive to the punk and post-punk era, you really could hear creative sparks like The Fall, Joy Division, The Worst and Frantic Elevators starting with next to nothing and slowly finding their feet, while the Hallé was slumping in the opposite direction (fortunately, the Hallé picked itself up again under Sir Mark Elder)."

Bass player Tony Friel founded The Fall in 1976 in Prestwich. A year later, singer Mark E Smith announced that his then girlfriend was going to take over as the band's manager, and Tony was very

disillusioned. He left the group and founded The Passage, asking you to play drums. At which point did you take on the role of singer?

"I set up the drums as tom-toms because Tony wanted to have a drum kit played by another ex-Fall member, the wonderful Karl Burns. At this time Lorraine Hilton and her sister Martine (now the novelist Martine Bailey) took part in a loose experimental way, as did Lizzy Johnson and Louise Alderman, who went on to form a feminist group with Una Baines from The Fall. I only sang later, and that was because no-one else was willing! The problem, as I soon discovered, were the lyrics and remembering them. Nowadays you can have them displayed on a laptop, but

I duetted on vibraphone with Maurice Gibb of The Bee Gees

back in the late 1970s you sometimes forgot where you were and made stuff up (which is what Mark of The Fall turned into a style). All early songs were settings of Brecht poems (permission was sought from his estate, though I don't think they gave a toss). I notated most

of the songs on manuscript paper, just as lyrics are notated and modified. We carried out an experimental project with the composer Simon Emmerson - now Emeritus Professor of Electronic Music. We did another one in Brussels with the composer Trevor Wishart - there's an archive item about it at York University. These gave us the reputation for being pseudo-intellectual, and there was indeed in Manchester a growing anti-intellectual stand which culminated with the Gallagher brothers in the 1990s."

What did the UK Punk explosion mean to you? Did it change your thinking, musically or socially?

"I was looking for aural energy, and that's where I found it. But a lot of the punk scene was fraudulent and cosmetic. The post-punk scene was quite different in its width, depth and subject matter. Go today to a post-punk club night and you are dancing each track to a different tempo, beat, sets of harmonies, instrumental textures, electronic timbres and lyrics. Take John Foxx, Ian Curtis, Pete Burns: born in the same region, around similar ages, quite different in tone and theme."

I first discovered you on the Pillows and Prayers 99p compilation, an album I still adore to this day. How did you become involved with Cherry Red Records?

"We were with Virgin for two albums, but then Cherry Red picked it up, courtesy of Mike Alway, who went on to create the Blanco y Negro label and have a hit with Everything But The Girl. Cherry Red was run by Iain McNay, who was mad about football. To gain a place



// a lot of the punk scene was fraudulent and cosmetic

//
in the Cherry Red roster you had to play a game with the staff. They decided that we - from Manchester - were too tough for them. Pillows and Prayers was a brilliant marketing scheme, but the artists on it were asked to forgo their royalties. Nobody thought that it would itself become fabled and still available (not at 99p)."

The Passage have always been regarded as an underground, independent band. Why do you think you didn't break through into the mainstream?

"Our sound world came about at the junction of acoustic and electronic. We have a moody and ironic character. On stage we were noisy and brash. We didn't really get to grips with what was coming such as dark goth or Kraftwerk's synths."

How did you feel about the other synth-based artists that were around the scene at the time?

"Well, we liked Giorgio Moroder's 'I Feel Love', Kraftwerk's melodies, John Foxx's 'Underpass' and the songs (and distinctive voice) of Gary Numan. I liked the German duo DAF - I wished they'd done more. Suicide were always interesting, as were Cabaret Voltaire, who

we played with at the YMCA in London. Meanwhile bands like OMD held no interest for us: cheap Kraftwerk rip-offs. We had a soft spot for The Human League who would do a set every Friday night at the Russell Club (the Factory) which hardly any-one took notice of, until they played their version of 'You've Lost That Loving Feeling', which was magical."

Do you have a favourite song by The Passage? Why do you like it?

"As one of the pioneering songs about non-binary sex, XOYO surely deserves its space. I'm told that the club in London's Shoreditch is named after it."

John Peel was certainly an early admirer and supporter of the band. What was it like behind the scenes recording the Peel sessions?

"The Peel sessions meant extra coverage of four songs per session, and you learned a fresh vocabulary as the engineers grappled with new digital technology. The BBC in the early days sometimes gave up and reverted to analogue. The technicians and producers were friendly and professional. They always looked for ways to get a little overtime added to the session. Peel rarely appeared - never in our case - but he wasn't needed at that stage anyway. It was a long day though, three-hour journey to London, 8 hours or more in the studio then the trip back in the van to Manchester in the dead of night."

You fronted the brilliant Oxford Roadshow on BBC television in the early 80s. Was that a catalyst to ending your time as The Passage?

"Whilst the pressure was on me to deliver songs, I tried to move out of that. I ended up as a presenter on BBC TV and,

later, radio. The 'new' pop world had come back with heavy investment into the likes of Madonna and Duran Duran. I think we decided that there was no superseding Kraftwerk or Talking Heads."

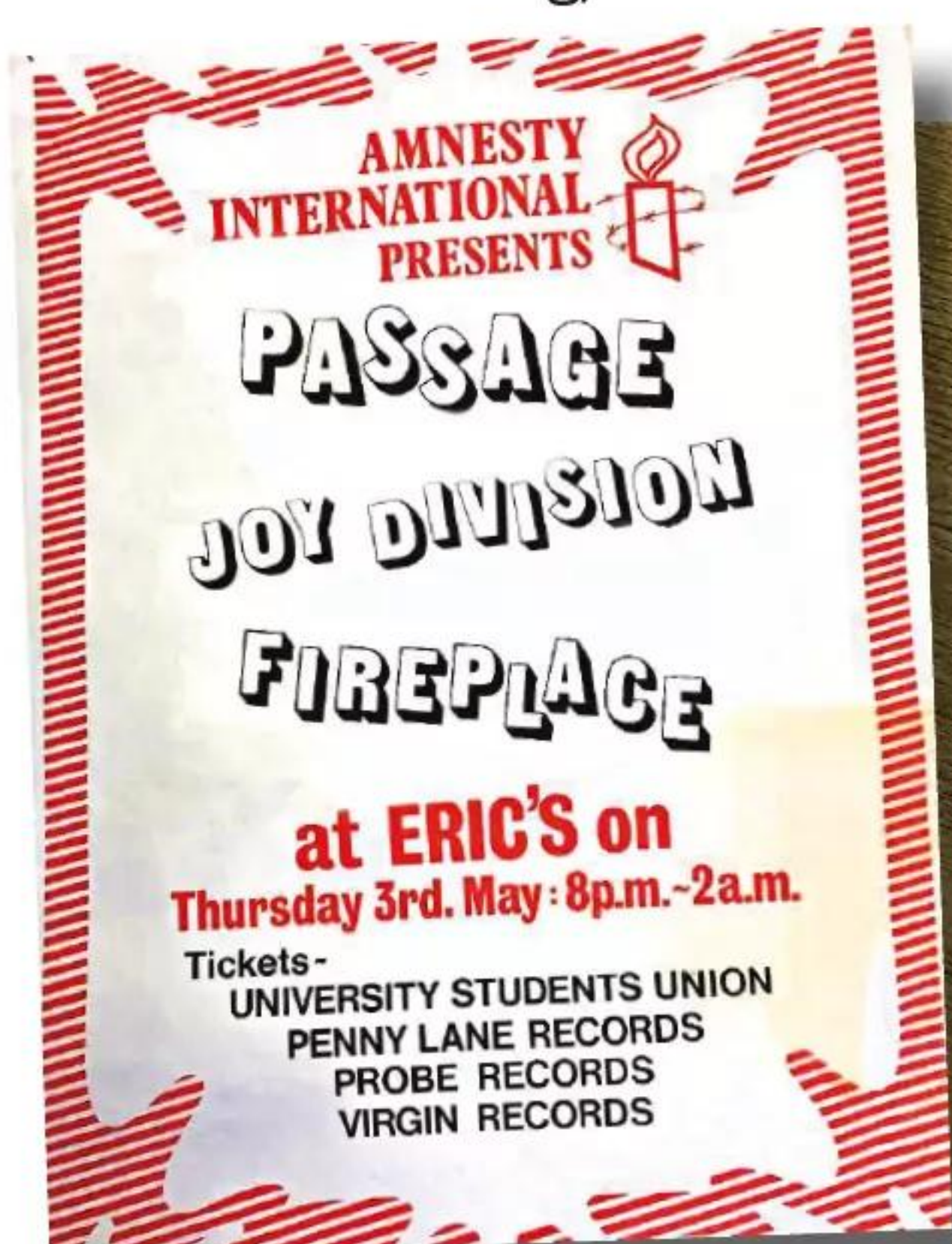
As The Passage you shared a stage with many great musicians, are there any that stand out in particular?

"Of the groups we played with, Joy Division were the most disorganised (when we played in Bristol Ian collapsed and it was clear that the band had no idea how to handle it), Monochrome Set were the most fun in the dressing room, whilst John Cooper-Clarke was (and is) the wittiest on stage and off. Budgie of Siouxsie and the Banshees was the best drummer I heard play live, though Mike Joyce was good and should have been in a band more deserving of his talents (ours!). Nowadays there are many canny singer-songwriters, of which to me Robyn is Queen and Björk is Ice Queen. Of the Passage, the most talented member was Karl Burns. He is a one-off, and down this passage for so short a time."

What are you up to at the moment and the near future?

"I have four books to my name, including my biography of Nico. Most recently the producer Markus Reinhard has asked us to provide lyrics and melody to a harmonic track he's created. The track's called '1-2-3'. We took up the challenge, but I don't know what will happen to this mysterious commission. Otherwise, I continue to do some musicological research, and I'm writing a novel." ●

www.thepassage.co.uk





credit Karin Freudel

'BEYOND THE BREAKING GLASS'

HAZEL O'CONNOR

Interview by Bridget Gray and Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Say the words 'Hazel O'Connor', and the first thing that comes into most people's minds is her breath-taking performance in the iconic, groundbreaking film *Breaking Glass*. That may be her best-known role, but since 1980 Hazel has been writing, singing, acting and touring constantly until experiencing a serious medical incident in early 2022.

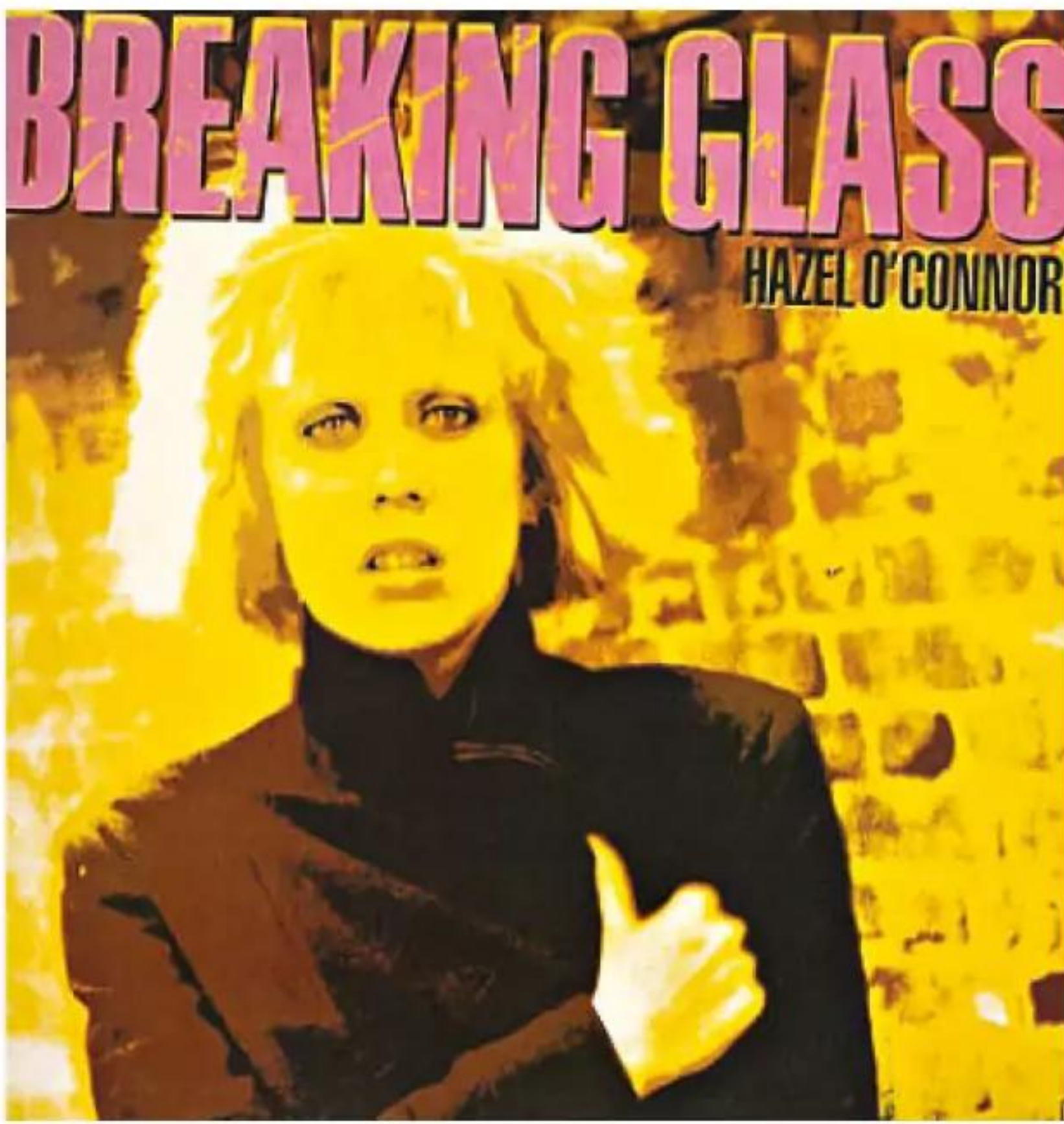
Blitzed Editors Kurt and Bridget were honoured to be invited to Hazel's French home on a beautiful sunny day in March, to talk with her about her incredible life, and her ongoing journey through recovery. We also spoke with a number of Hazel's

friends and fellow musicians who were happy to be part of this feature.

We started off by chatting about young Hazel back when she was a girl living in Coventry. Despite the confident, outgoing, larger-than-life Hazel we have all come to know and love over the years, she wasn't at all a show-off when at school. "No, I was just normal! I wasn't shy, there was only one friend I didn't like, but with everybody else I had a great time." Hazel had no ambitions as a young girl of being a popstar. "Oh no!! The opposite I suppose, I didn't know what I wanted to be. I was very arty though, I did painting and sewing, I wanted to make a career

being creative. My brother Neil was in a band called The Flys, he was really the musician."

In 1980 Hazel rose to fame performing the role of Kate Crowley in the film *Breaking Glass*, for which she also wrote and performed the soundtrack. The role of Kate was literally made for her, and mirrors many aspects of her own experiences as a young female musician in the late 70s and early 80s. She mused, "I think *Breaking Glass* will always be modern and relevant, and people say that the song 'Eighth Day' was a premonition of life today." Many of the songs from the album were released as singles, notably



'Eighth Day' and the hauntingly beautiful 'Will You'. The tour to promote the album had a relatively unknown group called Duran Duran supporting....

Following *Breaking Glass*, Hazel went on to write and record many more albums, with songs based on real people from her life, and real stories. For example, songs like 'Rebecca' (which still moves people to tears) about a friend she lost to cancer. When asked if she feels exposed sharing these with the world, she replied, "Yes of course I do, but I do it anyway. People who hear my songs often relate to the lyrics with events in their lives that they have gone through themselves, and they tell me it brings them comfort."

We talked to Hazel about her roots in Coventry, and in particular discussed The Coventry Music Museum of which Hazel is an honorary patron. "The directors of the museum, Pete and Julie Chambers are friends of mine and whenever I was in Coventry I would pop in to say hello. The museum is within the 2-Tone Village, and they very kindly hosted a fundraising music event last year which was organised by friends and fans. Everyone was so kind. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to travel for the last three years so I haven't been able to visit, but it is a very special place for me. They have my Variety Club of Great Britain Best Actress award for *Breaking Glass*, 1980 and my gold disc for *Breaking Glass* and Silver disc for 'D Days' at the



credit Pete Chambers

museum as well as a life-size cut out of me."

Pete Chambers, curator of Coventry Music Museum, speaks fondly of Hazel... "I remember once I had a bad leg, and she took us out for afternoon tea somewhere because she loves a scone. So we called her "Hazel O'Scone-or," that's her nickname, and how she loves a cup of tea, a herbal tea and a scone. I went to sit in this cafe in Kenilworth and I said I've got a bad leg, and I don't know what it is. Suddenly Hazel disappears under the tablecloth, she's hoisting up my trouser leg and she's inspecting my leg under this table. Everyone is laughing and I'm thinking, "This is bizarre. This is Hazel O'Connor under the table". That's Hazel. No airs and graces. She just gets on with it. She is amazing as a human being and so funny, just great to be around. Hazel is a close family friend, and she's always been there for us. I send her all my love and from everybody at the museum. We get so much interest from people asking about her and everybody sends their love and support."



Suky Singh, from the 2-Tone Village described a special moment with a special lady... "When she came to do a book signing here at the 2-Tone Village, she was doing a Q and A, and I went to get some books off her to sign and she said, "I've left all the books in the car." And I said, "well, why have you left him in the car?" Hazel replied "Well, they can buy them cheaper on Amazon than from me!". That typifies Hazel, she is always worrying and thinking about other people, and that's what makes her so special. She is a beautiful lady. We had a music fundraiser here last year with live bands, auctions, raffles, memorabilia, film-shows, and raised some money for Hazel. We said that we'd carry on supporting whichever way we can. There is a Hazel O'Connor memorabilia cabinet here and everything that's sold goes to her fundraising. So that's ongoing. I'm sure we'll be doing

another fundraiser at some point as well. We'll make that happen."

Hazel's songwriting is prolific, and the songs span many genres, but also adapt themselves to being performed in different ways. Hazel doesn't have a particular favourite style of music when it comes to singing live though. "I just love to perform. I have been lucky to work with some really great musicians over the years and many have become good friends, like Sarah [Fisher] and Clare [Hirst] who are my true sisters. It's wonderful performing with people that I love and trust, such as the girls, or Cormac De Barra "a wonderful human being, as well as a fab musician" [*Breaking Glass Barefoot*, Hazel O'Connor].



Credit Claire Wheeler
Clare Hirst, Hazel, Sarah Fisher

Clare Hirst – Saxophonist, composer and bandleader who's worked with many incredible musicians including Hazel O'Connor, David Bowie, The Communards, Maxi Priest and Mike Garson told us... "I joined a band called The Belle Stars in 1982. One of my first jobs with them was in Cafe Pacifico in Covent Garden for a charity (I forget which, or maybe I didn't even know!) I think the idea was that people paid money to be served cocktails by 'pop stars'. We were not very well known then and I had only just joined, so no-one had a clue who I was. I'd just given up my job as a barmaid and was spectacularly unimpressed to find myself working for nothing! I think the confusion was written plainly on my face and a certain Ms O'Connor was obviously feeling the same way. She came over to me and said did I fancy going outside for a smoke and thus began our long friendship.

When she moved to America I didn't see much of her for a while, then out of the blue she phoned me and said that in about a year's time she would be forming a band and would I be interested. Well, I said yes not really believing it would actually happen but true to her word almost exactly a year later she rang me and that's when I started working with her again in the trio [with Sarah Fisher].

We gigged together all the time for about the next 12 years and must have done hundreds of gigs and made 3 CDs together, The Bluja Project, Here she Comes, and I Give You My Sunshine.

She is one of the greatest songwriters, her songs are so powerful, and lyrics are so moving, she can always find a different way to say things. Our sets just got longer and longer because we would want to add new stuff, but we never wanted to take anything out! It is a wonderful experience playing with her and I feel very privileged to have been able to do this."

Sarah Fisher is a singer, songwriter, pianist, keyboardist, appearing nationally and internationally and has worked as a session musician for many international artists. "I met Hazel through my very good friend Sue. Her sister Annette was a dog behaviourist, and Hazel took her dogs for training. On a very rainy cold day 14 years ago I got a phone call from Sue saying she had been to visit Hazel in Ireland. She talked of wanting to start a jazzy acoustic trio to play some gigs, but she needed a piano / vocalist. Sue pipes up saying she knew one and that was me. Anyhow she invited me over for dinner with Hazel to her flat and proceeded to tell me to bring my keyboard and learn a few of her songs including 'Will You'. I did as I was told, and I met Hazel O Connor. She was very relaxed and friendly and that evening we sang a few songs together in harmony. I mentioned I knew a great sax player called Clare Hirst and she said she knew her too. I said at the end of a great evening "please don't feel you have to work with me, it was just great to meet you". I heard nothing and then 3 weeks later I was having a few friends including Sue over for dinner and 'ding dong', Hazel was at the door. I couldn't believe it. She asked me if I would like to do a few gigs and of course I said yes. We toured as a trio for 12 years and had such a lot of laughs on and off stage. I really miss those days but how lucky I was to have had that experience to perform with an iconic pop star whose songs are wonderful, lyrically and melodically. We had a fantastic time and were so well received everywhere we played. Thankyou Hazel for giving me the opportunity. I have visited Hazel a few times and I'm happy to say she hasn't lost her playful, fun loving personality."



Cormac De Barra is a harpist, singer and television presenter and is part of the Moya Brennan Band. Cormac very kindly spoke to us about his work with Hazel. "It was Hazel who first got me singing on stage. From a W.B. Yeats play in Dublin in 1993 to our first trip to the Edinburgh Fringe in 1998, telling Hazel's life story with an Irish harp, a bag of props, two ugly puppets and me singing harmony vocals. It was only us two on stage, and Haz said "you'll have to sing, too." So I did. We got the coveted 'Pick of the Fringe' that year. Then came tours of the UK, Holland, Germany, some eclectic US shows and an epic trip to Australia. So many of the people I got to meet thanks to Haz were all her dear friends, and many would become mine, too. The actors Julie Graham and Joe McGann housed us for so many weeks of so many English tours in their magical Pink House in Brighton. Hazel's mum, Joyce, became our tour mammy and kept the peace, as well as giving sanctuary, whenever we passed through Coventry.

Hazel also opened the door to songwriting for me, a joy that I will be forever grateful for. Her ability to tell powerful stories through her songs is exceptional and so rare. We got to record albums with Tony Visconti and Martin Rushent but the album I am most proud of is Beyond Breaking Glass, with the songs from that first Edinburgh show we did. That album also includes the first song I got to co-write with Hazel, '(Walk On) Beyond the Broken Glass'. Those words echo in my head as I think of the wicked and cruel turn her health took. I profoundly hope her recovery continues so we may see her back in Ireland again to make new songs."

In addition to her own music, Hazel has been known to do some fantastic cover versions such as when she covered the George Michael song 'One More Try'. We asked her, why that track? "George was a really good friend, and this song matched perfectly with my other songs. George was also in the video of 'Don't

Touch Me'. I arrived at a sound check after visiting my Mum in hospital once and The Subterraneans were playing 'Chasing Cars'. I loved it so much I decided to do the song with Clare and Sarah, and it became a firm favourite for the three of us as well as the fans. I also covered David Bowie's 'Heroes' with my good friend Roger [Taylor] and the video features many of my heroes. I have done many cover versions over the years. I always loved playing 'Redemption Song' with Cormac on the harp."



Mark Roberts of The Subterraneans told us, "In 2004, whilst we were performing at a show, Hazel approached us backstage, introduced by her lifelong friend, Roger Lomas, she asked us to join her for a series of dates including Glastonbury 2004. This led to a lasting friendship and working relationship which we are very proud of. We made three albums and one live video with Hazel, performed with her live for over twenty years and collaborated with her for the Re-Joyce project. (Hazel O'Connor Collective.) Not only has Hazel been a great part of our musical life, but she has also become an amazing friend. When Hazel became ill a few years ago, it took us all by surprise and devastated us. When we heard that Hazel needed some support, we put on a show and made sure that Hazel was awarded a cheque for her health support. We try to stay in touch with Hazel through her amazing friend Claire Wheeler via the internet. She will always be a part of our story both in Music and friendship."



Roger Taylor – singer, musician and producer: "I met Hazel in 2017. I had moved from England to County Wicklow and built

a recording studio behind my house. I knew Hazel lived locally and was always blown away by her live performances. I posted a letter through her letterbox to introduce myself, then one day about 4 weeks later I had a call from her saying she would call round for a brew. From then on we seemed to just hit it off. We both had dogs, my partner Maeve was a vegetarian and so was Hazel. When she was in Ireland we would meet up 2-3 times a week just nattering and walking the dogs. We recorded a couple of albums together and had such craic on trips away for gigs. I have never met such a determined, creative, generous and strong woman as Hazel."



credit Ken Bonsall

Ken Bonsall, lead singer with the folk punk/rock band Ferocious Dog: "I got to know Hazel personally through Covid lockdown as we would constantly facetime each other. That song 'Will You' I remember just playing it over and over again as a 12 year old boy, then we sub headlined a festival with Ferocious Dog headlining the second stage straight after Hazel had finished on the main stage, I was listening to 'Will You' from the back of the stage and during the instrumental she walked off the stage and there she was, confronted by this big Punk Rocker with the biggest Liberty bell spikes with tears in his eyes, she came straight up and gave me the biggest hug, she didn't know me from Adam. Years later, Ali, a fan of the band from Newcastle read that one of my favourite songs was 'Will You' and she was a great friend of Hazel who worked with her in the early days of Punk Rock and New Wave, apparently she told Hazel all about this band, Ferocious Dog, Ali Banks put us both in contact. During lockdown, we chatted loads on video call, Hazel was doing some 'Live Lockdown Sessions' and I was doing the weekly 'Sing Along with Red Ken on Lock Down 'Thosdy''. Hazel had

started to record her acoustic album and kindly asked if I would record a duet of 'Will You'... what an honour! After we came out of lockdown, Ferocious Dog got into the studio to record The Hope album and I asked if Hazel wouldn't mind us recording a version of her iconic song and return the favour by joining me on our version, she said yes.

We travelled down to Sevenoaks on the M25 as she was staying over for the night at her friend's house, we shot the video in a few hours in woodland out the back of Claire's house. Hazel was a natural, obviously being an actress and musician all in one. Hazel worked with me and our videographer for the story line and the filming on one of the hottest days of the year went so well.. Such a perfect day. Hazel is a beautiful lady inside and out."

Moya Brennan, Irish folk singer, songwriter, harpist and philanthropist: "I was always intrigued by Hazel O'Connor because of what she said and what she did – how outgoing she was. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I'd end up meeting her at an album launch for the trad band, Altan. But the minute we met it was like we'd known each other all our lives. We just didn't stop talking. We just fell in love with each other from the word go. When she asked me to sing the track 'Hidden' on her album, it was an absolute thrill for me. And then the chance to do it live in a couple of places – including the Croissant Neuf and The Avalon stages at Glastonbury - with her and her full band. I remember her coming down to Donegal to sing at my father's pub. People were mesmerised. After watching that performance, I remember thinking "it's back to the drawing board." To watch her was fascinating because you learn so much – from her charm and her incredible stage presence. She has changed so many people's lives. I am so very proud to be able to call her a friend. I love her to bits. She's somebody very special and it's amazing how much she has given to the world both musically and as a person. A wonderful, wonderful heart."

Meanwhile, back in France, we asked if Hazel was listening to any music in particular, but she's not one for even listening to the radio. Indeed on long car journeys she would prefer to listen to audio books. She used to enjoy listening to female artists that were up and coming,

and took an interest, but the music industry has changed so much. She much prefers to perform and play music with her friends, or to just have her friends around her.



credit Karin Freudel

Hazel explained, "I have two friends, Cax Hoekzema and Benoît Pont who regularly come to my house and we go through some songs together. They both play guitar, and I sing and play the harmonica. I enjoy it very much and it's good for me to sing again although my voice is still not as strong as it was. My speech is still causing me problems but I'm working very hard to get better."

Benoît is also Hazel's karate instructor, and before being taken ill Hazel was working towards her black belt. She loves karate, "it's another thing that's really special for me", and then we spent a few happy minutes discussing karate and the enjoyment Bridget also used to get as a fellow black belt from kicking people... Hazel laughed fondly as she showed us a picture of Benoît on Facebook, "he's so funny!" she tells us.

In addition to her musical skills, Hazel is also an accomplished actress and has made many television and theatre appearances over the years. Her friend Eve Ferret, actress, comedian and singer-songwriter, reminisced about the early days. "Hazel and I were invited over 40 years ago to appear in a play together 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' at the Royal Exchange in Manchester. We were to play friends as 'party girls' coming into the asylum, hilarious as no acting was required, we had both spent years going out clubbing, meeting lunatics and having fun. We hit it off straight away, always laughing and with an 'unspoken knowing' as I like to call it, that we were both safe in each other's company. We put together a show with Hazel singing her hits and I was the support act. 30 years later she

joined me at the Arts Theatre in the West End where I had my one woman show and Hazel then joined me with no questions asked but the line – ‘what do you want me to do!’ - she is just a darling. I also had the pleasure of doing backing vocals for her at numerous gigs including the infamous Rock against Racism at Brockwell Park with bottles flying and Mick Karn from Japan on saxophone, to taking our beloved dogs for training, her so very petite and blonde with her huge Alsatian and me an amazonian redhead with my tiny toy poodle we looked hilarious together. Gaps of years from not seeing each other did not break our mutual love and respect for each other, Hazel is still the strong, talented, funny woman that I first met all those years ago, and we still have the same ‘unspoken knowing’ that we will be the ‘party girls’ forever.”

And on the subject of film appearances, Blitzed recently went along to the premier of HOUND at the Rio Cinema, Dalston on 6 April 2025. HOUND: Visions in the life of the poet Francis Thompson is a film script by Chris Ward that was first staged at the Riverside Studios, London (2012) and then went on an acclaimed tour of London’s churches. Filming started in 2015, and was filmed entirely in Hackney and Stoke Newington with a cast that includes Daniel Hutchinson, Wayne Sleep, Hazel O’Connor and Toyah Wilcox. Although filmed a few years ago, the release was delayed due to Covid.



Regarding having Hazel in the film, Chris told us: “I’m honoured to have preserved the amazing performance, and the vocals of a legend for posterity. I first met Hazel in 1981 at my play’s after-party. We were talking on the stairs, and she asked me to write her life story – which was quite daunting! Years later the film role came up and she wanted to sing the blues. She knew we were independent cinema and then told me she hadn’t had any payment for ‘Breaking Glass’, but that Mohamed

Al-Fayed (Dodi financed the film), gave her a diamond ring (which she lost!).”

Clearly, performing live is one of Hazel’s biggest joys in life. We spoke to her Tour Agent, Crispin Thomas, who has been with her since 2003. “I originally met Hazel on a bench at Glastonbury in 2000 after seeing her perform her acclaimed theatre and music autobiographical show Beyond the Breaking Glass in The Theatre Tent with Cormac De Barra. I’d seen her name a lot in music listings, and I always thought, like a lot of people, she was a punk, and hadn’t known she was writing her own songs. I asked her if she did festivals, and if she needed an agent. I had a manager called Maureen Simpson, and around 2003 Hazel asked me to do some gigs. We did them between us, me and Moe, and then she handed it to me and the tour started getting bigger. Hazel gives everything to the fans. She loves interacting with them. After a show they queue up. They get loads of selfies, and they love her. That’s what I love about Hazel, how she is towards the audience, she embraces them in.”



Hazel’s last live appearance was in September 2021 as part of the Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, “COMING HOME - HAZEL O’CONNOR & The Subterraneans with Clare Hirst & Sarah Fisher” at Queen of Flanders Spiegeltent, Coventry. A number of planned concerts having already been cancelled due to Covid, she kept us entertained with home video mini concerts on social media during lockdown, and had many other events lined up for 2022 such as a show with Ferocious Dog in

Nottingham and the Electric Ladies tour with Lene Lovich and Toyah. Sadly, Hazel wasn’t able to be there... In January 2022 Hazel suffered a bleed on her brain, at her home in France where she was alone with her beloved dogs Lolly and Diva. She has stayed in France since. Hazel explained, “It wasn’t really my decision, I didn’t have a choice because I was staying in France when I had my stroke and I haven’t been able to travel since so I’ve ended up staying here. I like it here, and to be honest I’m not making any money, so financially I’m better off staying put, but I miss my friends.”

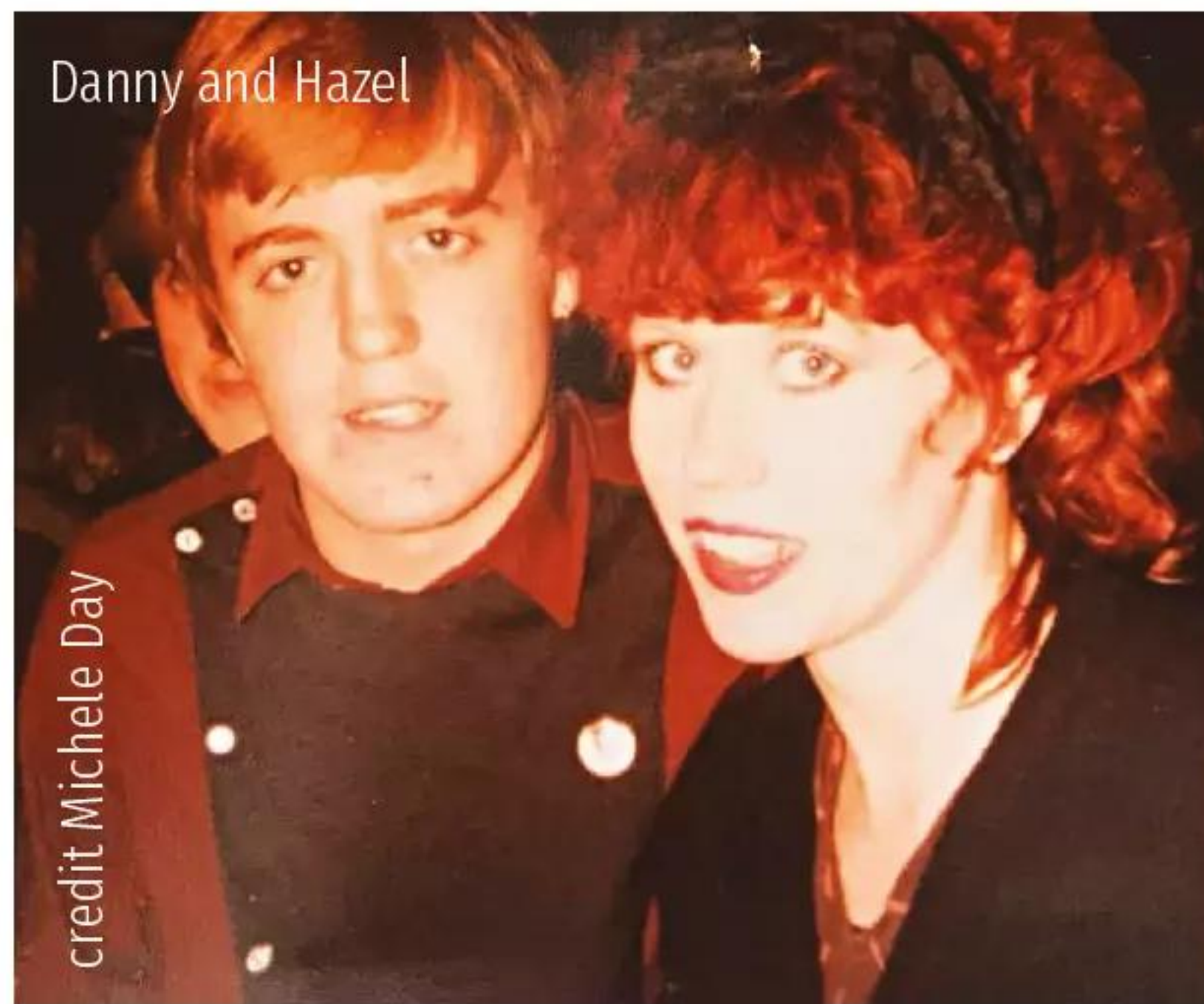
We asked Hazel, when taken ill, how aware was she of the seriousness of her situation? “I was conscious, but I couldn’t move. I was in my bedroom with my dogs, but the door was locked from the inside, which is something I would normally never do. My friend Benoît who found me, had to break down the door (he’s like a superhero!) but the rest I don’t really remember. I think it was two days before I was found. I was due to do an interview and didn’t show up and the alarm was raised.” She spent a month in hospital in Toulouse, followed by a rehabilitation centre in Lamalou-les-Bains, and is now recovering at home. Have her recent experiences had any impact on her religious beliefs? “I used to believe in something, but I can’t deal with it at the moment, I’m just getting back on my feet. I think I will one day, come back to some kind of faith”. As regards songwriting, she is not yet thinking about writing anything new. “Not at the moment. But I have already written a lot of songs! For now, I am working on singing them again and concentrating on my recovery.”

As the brain bleed affected Hazel’s speech and mobility she is not yet able to tour and still requires frequent carer visits. Despite her fame, the enormous success of the Breaking Glass film and her early albums, unscrupulous music industry deals left her penniless, and she has worked constantly and tirelessly her whole life. In her own words, Hazel admits “I have no money, but I’m rich in friendship.” Two such wonderful friends of hers, Claire Wheeler and Danny Gerrard have organised a ‘Go Fund Me’ page to help raise funds for her ongoing medical and day-to-day bills so that Hazel can concentrate on her recovery, with all

donations going directly to Hazel.

Life-long fan and friend Claire Wheeler expressed, "The message I always like to get across about Hazel is how she's always there for people, always willing to listen and she gives great advice. She makes you feel special, and her lyrics resonate with people from all walks of life. Hazel was there for me as a teenager with her music, was there again when my Mum died, with her music and as a friend and now it's my turn to be there for her. Hazel was one of my childhood heroines. About 14 years ago now, Hazel's mum Joyce went into Myton Hospice in Coventry, and my mum was going in and out at the same time, and Hazel did a charity single called 'Re-Joyce' to raise money for the hospice. My Mum phoned me up and she said Hazel O'Connor has done this charity single and I'm like Oh my God, Hazel O'Connor, you know? So I Googled Hazel and saw that she had been touring all this time and I went along to a gig. I met her afterwards and we had a chat, and then not long after that, Hazel's mum passed away, and my mum ended up going into the Hospice the following day, so I think it was six weeks apart that our mum's passed away. So whenever I went to a gig, we had that sort of bond, and then I started doing fundraising for the Hospice like a skydive and the three peaks. I'd get Hazel's memorabilia. Hazel would sign it, and then I'd auction it on eBay and make money for the Hospice. Hazel was touring with the girls at the time. So I offered to give the girls a lift to a gig, and then I ended up driving them permanently! I started doing the journey when Hazel would go from Ireland to France. She'd stop at my house in Kent with the dogs, and then I'd come with her for the big journey through France and then fly home, or the other way around. That's a lot of driving! But we used to have a laugh in the car. Good journeys! So, that's how we met and how I came to be friends with my childhood heroine."

Danny Gerrard is a long-time fan and friend: "I've been a fan of Hazel's since Breaking Glass came out in 1980, I saw it at least four times at the cinema and many more times since on VHS and DVD. The first Hazel O'Connor gig I went to was at Dominion Theatre on 6th December 1980 with Duran Duran as support. I must have seen over 100 gigs now of all styles,



and I've always loved her rasping vocals. Hazel's Mum, Joyce, used to run her fan club and we used to gravitate to Coventry for coffee mornings in the early 80's. Very Rock & Roll! We camped outside her flat in Swiss Cottage in 1983 when we were kids, and she invited us in for tea & coffee!!! There's a coffee theme going on here! Hazel has given us some amazing times over four decades and has given her fans so much of her time. Now it's our time to look after Hazel."



Hazel is very aware of the love that people have for her and very appreciative. She wants to give a message to her friends and supporters: "I would like to thank everyone for all the lovely messages that are sent and for all the support I have been given. People have been so generous. Thank you to everyone for all the financial help, it has helped hugely with medical bills and care bills and with

day to day living expenses. I'm not able to work so the support has helped me so much. I know there was huge support from the Electric Ladies tour, thank you to everyone that was involved and everyone who attended the shows. I saw the videos of the crowd shouting out "We love you Hazel!" every night, led by Toyah, Lene Lovich, Saffron and the bands.

I am lucky to have such loyal, caring fans. Many of my fans would bring their children to shows so my fan base stretches across the generations. I know a lot of people enjoyed my lockdown videos which carried on after we were all free to go out again and unfortunately I'm not able to do them at the moment but I'm working very hard with physiotherapy and singing with my friends, and on getting better, and I'd like to say thank you for your patience and understanding."

If you would like to get involved and support Hazel on her road to recovery, you can buy her memorabilia at the

2-Tone Village in Coventry, or donate directly to the Go Fund Me campaign by scanning the QR code in this feature with your mobile phone. ●





'COVENTRY CULTURE — IT'S BLACK AND WHITE' THE 2-TONE VILLAGE AND COVENTRY MUSIC MUSEUM INTERVIEW WITH SUKY SINGH AND PETE CHAMBERS

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

The 2-Tone Village in Coventry is a fascinating hub of multicultural music, activities, memorabilia and records, café, music museum and live venue, with a strong connection to, and bond with, the local community. Within the village, The Coventry Music Museum is a permanent independent museum run entirely by unpaid volunteers. Together they combine to offer a fantastic and quite unique visitor experience to music lovers. Blitzed paid The 2-Tone Village a visit and chatted with Director of the Museum and Events Manager for The 2-Tone Village, Suky Singh, and also Director and Curator of the Museum, Pete Chambers, BEM. We started by asking Curator Pete Chambers to sum up the importance of Coventry to the world of music.

PC "Well, as soon as 2-Tone hit, that put Coventry on the map. We'd just had punk, which had got a very big mouth and not

very much to say. Much as I love punk, that's the way it was, and everybody was looking at London, but it was all coming up behind them from little old Coventry. Bands emerged like The Specials, King and The Enemy, who were proud to say "We're from Coventry" which is great... It kicked all these musicians up the bum, made them want to be in the next Enemy or the next Specials and that lit up the whole scene."

SS "I was born in Coventry, and in 1979, when the 2-Tone thing kicked off, Coventry became the centre of the universe. The music was incredible of course, but for me, the big interest was the fact of what 2-Tone stood for. My parents came from India to work in England and so I was part of the first generation of Asians and young black kids that were born here. And then when the problems started erupting in Coventry, with people coming up to you

and saying things like "go home", you start thinking, "but I'm born here, and yet my parents are from India." It was a real confusion of identity. 2-Tone was a thing that really came out and stood up for people like me and said, "listen, we can all live together... this place is big enough for all of us and we'll do it through music". So suddenly we had all these bands with mixed race people in them and the whole concept of 2-Tone was born. So the music was big, but what it stood for was massive for me and so many others."

We were intrigued as to how the idea of the 2-Tone Village came about, and the catalysts for its creation. Suky Singh explained how the initial idea became a reality.

SS "We used to be at 2-Tone Central in the city centre, at the Lanchester Polytechnic building, with a lot of history obviously with The Specials etc. That's

where Horace Panter and Jerry Danvers met. A decision was made that we had to leave the building and look for an alternative place to go. Higher rent and rates meant we had to look outside the city centre, and we sort of stumbled on this place. It was basically empty. It was off the beaten track, and we thought this would be ideal. That's where the concept of the 2-Tone Village came from. We wanted to make it an attraction that people will make the effort to get to. Then we had the museum, then the shops, the cafe, a live venue, all sort of fitted in together. So that probably all started around 2011- 2012 time, but it's grown into something we are proud of that can be passed along to the next generation."

Within the 2-Tone Village, The Coventry Museum of Music is a fabulous collection of displays and photographs, exhibits and memorabilia that combine to give a very inclusive and tactile experience to visitors, telling the story of Coventry's music heritage. There is a lovely feeling that everyone is emotionally invested in this. So how and when did Pete decide that Coventry needed the museum, and that he would be the one to make it happen?

PC "Some years ago, a friend of mine was approached in Coventry city centre by two Japanese girls, tourists I guess, and they wanted to know where the 2-Tone was. They were aware of this global brand, and I realised that Coventry hadn't done anything to celebrate the place where it was created. When my friend told me this I was disgusted. So I thought we're going to do something. I put together the 2-Tone Trail, a tour of all the pertinent sites, and we had some badges done that they were selling at the Coventry Tourism Office, but it was an itch that still needed scratching. I helped to create the Coventry Walk of Fame, The Coventry Music Hall of Fame, all these different tourism things. Music tourism in Coventry needed addressing. I'm quite proud to say I was the man that did that because nobody else wanted to do it. I had the time, and the knowledge and that was the start of the journey. We effectively created a small business, but I never thought of it like that. I just wanted my little museum that celebrated local music."

Coventry Music Museum is essentially funded by donations and the kindness of the community, visitors and a handful of patrons. It is a treasure trove of fascinating artefacts from music history. So, how can visitors get involved, interact with the Museum and help keep it running?

PC "One of the ways the public can get involved is, if you've got some music memorabilia in your cupboards that's collecting dust and you'd rather show it to a lot of other people, then get in touch. The best way to help is to come and visit us here. You can vote on our wall of hits; we do the chart every week. A lot of people tend to vote for 'Ghost Town' obviously. You can get dressed up, be a Rude Boy, a Rude Girl, 'Three

Punk had a big mouth and not much to say

Minute Hero', just get involved. We have a John and Yoko exhibit, a Delia Derbyshire area. We have football related exhibits as well as film memorabilia. You can play instruments, see all the rare music artefacts and clothing, there are photograph opportunities, there's even

a theremin you can have a go on. Most of the money comes from people that pay to get in. It's only £6, children are free and there's concessions too. We want everybody to see our museum, so we try and keep it low and it's just enough to keep us steady. Nobody gets paid for anything here, all volunteers, we're open Thursdays to Sundays and we're here every day. I don't get paid. My wife Julie doesn't get paid. We just love being here all the time, it's a labour of love."

The Museum had, until recently, four very well-known supporters from the world of music, each with a special link to Coventry. Pete explains...

PC "Frank Ifield was a great ally and supporter, and a lovely man. Sadly, he recently passed away. Frank had four number ones, and he was one of the first artists to sell a million singles. Pete Waterman is a good guy, a great supporter of us. I mean his career speaks for itself really, a world-renowned producer and hit maker who loves the city. Neville Staple, ex-Specials of course, and Christine, his wife... they used to be here all the time when they were living in Coventry. Now they live in London, but they still support us, and it's always great to see them here. And of course, the lovely Hazel O'Connor, she's just an amazing human being. Hazel has always been there for us."

Museum Director and Curator Pete has personally been recognised on the Coventry Music Wall of Fame, winning the Coventry Good Citizen Award, and even awarded the British Empire Medal for services to the community, followed by an honorary degree from Coventry University... so people are taking notice



credit Kurt Sindair-Hall



We want everybody to see our museum



of the invaluable community work he is doing here. Pete and Suky are providing an important addition to Coventry's tourism appeal. So, we were saddened to discover Coventry City Council's lack of financial support and encouragement towards the dynamic duo and what they have been achieving for the city over the last decade or more...

PC "We occasionally get a grant from Coventry City Council and obviously during COVID, we had help. But that was a central government thing. We don't pay rates so that's a really good thing. I really don't want to sound ungrateful, but the reality is, especially in a City of Culture, we have always felt like the poor relations. You mentioned that I've got the Good Citizen Award, well I was in the Council Chamber to receive it. There were about 60 local councillors in the room and I did a little speech, I said, "Can I

ask how many people here have actually been to the museum?", and out of the 60 councillors only four or five people put their hands up to show they had been to the museum, and I was so disappointed, kind of like, "Oh, come on, guys, this is a joke". Yes, it would be nice for a little bit more support of course."

When you spend even a short time in the company of both Pete and Suky, you notice their love of music, passion for helping people, their kindness, and their humility. We asked them both how important the 2-Tone Village and the Coventry Music Museum are to the people of Coventry, its musicians, the local and wider community?

SS "2-Tone is one of the biggest exports out of Coventry, and the fact that we can still celebrate it and we're here still, flying the flag and keeping that message alive is important to the city, especially

in the present climate. Obviously 2-Tone expanded with bands like Madness, Bad Manners, The Beat and others carrying the baton. But the heart is here. With our live venue, Knights, we attract a lot of upcoming bands, and not just Ska and Reggae, the venue is open to everybody. We have local young bands and also touring musicians from way outside Coventry using us as a platform to perform and get recognition. We are involved with our local community and also wider charity work too. We've been working with an orphanage in Uganda called Cefovid (Community Empowerment for Village Development) for the last 11 years. We've supported Myton Hospice, Teenage Cancer Trust, we use our platform to support local charities and overseas charities when we can. Helping and supporting multicultural communities is at the heart of what we do. That's important to us."

PC "It's just a lovely atmosphere when you're here and the visitors come back again and again. If you look on TripAdvisor, we're Number 1 in the things to do in Coventry, and if you read the reviews, 50% is about the actual building and facilities, but the other 50% is about the personal interaction that they have had with the volunteers and the whole feeling of the place, the experience while they were here, and we love that."

We carry on doing what we do. We will never forget what put Coventry on the map in the first place, multiculturalism and music. That's what we're all celebrating at The Museum and the whole of The 2-Tone Village." ●

www.2tonevillage.com

<https://www.covmm.co.uk>



credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall



credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall



'SHOOTING STAR' THEREZA BAZAR INTERVIEW

by Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Canadian-born Thereza Bazar discovered success in her late teens as a member of 1970's group Guys 'n' Dolls. Following a two-year whirlwind of hits and TV appearances, Thereza and boyfriend / bandmate David Van Day left the group and created pop duo Dollar, who went on to have ten Top 40 chart hits including 'Shooting Star', 'Mirror, Mirror', 'Give Me Back My Heart' and 'Oh L'Amour', before calling it a day in 1983. After a couple of reunions, the duo split for good, and Thereza now performs Dollar's hits alongside her own material with a new band. She spoke to Blitzed about her life and what she has been up to recently.

You met David Van Day when you were 17 and auditioned for Guys 'n' Dolls. The group enjoyed a number of hit singles in the mid-1970s, and you became a couple too. But, disillusioned with the choice of

material and the musical direction, you both decided to leave. That was a brave decision, but it did pay off. Were you nervous at leaving?

"We actually got kicked out of Guys 'n' Dolls. David was planning to leave anyway as he wasn't getting any lead vocals and therefore not enough camera shots. Our plan was for me to stay on working in Guys 'n' Dolls, but as we were 'an item' they decided to throw us both out. It was the best thing that could have happened in hindsight, although I was devastated at the time!"

The UK public took Dollar to their hearts, and you soon had a string of successful releases that achieved UK chart status. How did you both feel at the time, with each single being a hit? Invincible maybe?

"Not at all. I was always very invested in our records and proud of them. The

second we had a guaranteed hit I would be worrying about the follow up single."

Dollar was possibly the first prominent boy/girl duo in the UK charts. Do you think that being in a relationship was a benefit to the music you created, and how the fans took to you?

"I don't think that had too much to do with it really.. it was about the production and the sound... but maybe being romantically involved was a good angle for press I suppose."

You and David had some fabulous songs, and you looked great together too. What kind of attention did you get from fans? Any strange gifts from them?

"No strange gifts, but a few fans were

We actually got kicked out of Guys 'n' Dolls

persistently always hanging around the stage doors and TV studios ... I was naïvely intrigued."

Can you remember your first live performance on stage? What were you feeling?

"I was always nervous, but the good nerves as I hate to be under prepared."

When you got the call to appear on Top of The Pops for the first time, what was that like? Did it live up to your expectations?

"I was ecstatic as I knew if we did a good job, 'Shooting Star' would climb the charts. It had a super modern sound."

In 1981, you approached the now legendary record producer Trevor Horn, whom you had met during your days in Guys n' Dolls, and asked if he would work with Dollar. He agreed and produced

// maybe being romantically involved was a good angle for press //

your 1981 and 1982 material. Horn's production work gave Dollar a more distinctive sound, which proved very popular. What was he like to work with?

"Trevor changed my life ... his vision creating musical landscapes was exactly how I imagined our records and how I hear music to this day. He was a genius ... so much just happened as if by magic."

Dollar split up in 1983. How different was it for you when you became a solo artist?

"I never wanted to become a solo artist. If Trevor had produced the album, which was the plan, it might have all turned out differently. I had a brilliant time co-writing my album with the cream of British songwriters though... what an experience."

Do you think that your solo album *The Big Kiss* deserved better handling and promotion by the record company?

"Yes! It got caught up in the sacking of the head of MCA in the US... it was a disaster. A real sense of what could/should have been."

Dollar made a live appearance in 2004 at Wembley Arena, alongside ABC and Pet Shop Boys, in a Prince's Trust show celebrating the career of Trevor Horn. Was that an amazing experience?

"Yes, it was amazing, and I felt humbled .. to understand all over again that Dollar was the first in the relay race passing the baton onto ABC and so on."

In 2008 you took part in the *Pop Goes the Band* TV programme, where you both had a makeover and got to perform together as Dollar back in the spotlight. Did you learn anything new about each other and also about yourself?

"Yes, never do another reality show like



Copyright Thereza Bazar

this EVER again! David and I were very different people, which I had got to know, but this clarified how much we or I had changed."

Did it ignite any feelings of wanting to perform again?

"Definitely not with David... but possibly it caused some rumblings in me."

Looking back, how proud are you of what you and David achieved?

"I'm incredibly proud of our music and how Dollar transcended opinions and bias. It was and will always be about the music, and sometimes in spite of image and musical genre."

You have been performing live with a band for the last couple of years. Do you still enjoy performing in front of an audience? Is it a different dynamic on stage now?

"I am learning to LOVE performing live now... it's all about nostalgia, seeing the audience happy and reliving their youth and past experiences, and being taken back to the glorious 80s is amazing."

I ask this question as a parent myself.. What do your sons Alex and Sam make of their mum's life as a popstar? Are they proud to share with their friends, or are they embarrassed?

(Laughs) "Oh, mostly proud but sometimes critical .. I take it as a compliment that they are interested."

What is the achievement you are most proud of, professionally or personally?

"Personally, raising two young men who hold values that make me proud of them.

Professionally, that I have always remained authentic to my musical beliefs and I treasure the incredibly talented individuals I have worked with and still work with."

You're appearing at the *Let's Rock 2025* festival. How exciting is that? What can we expect from you?

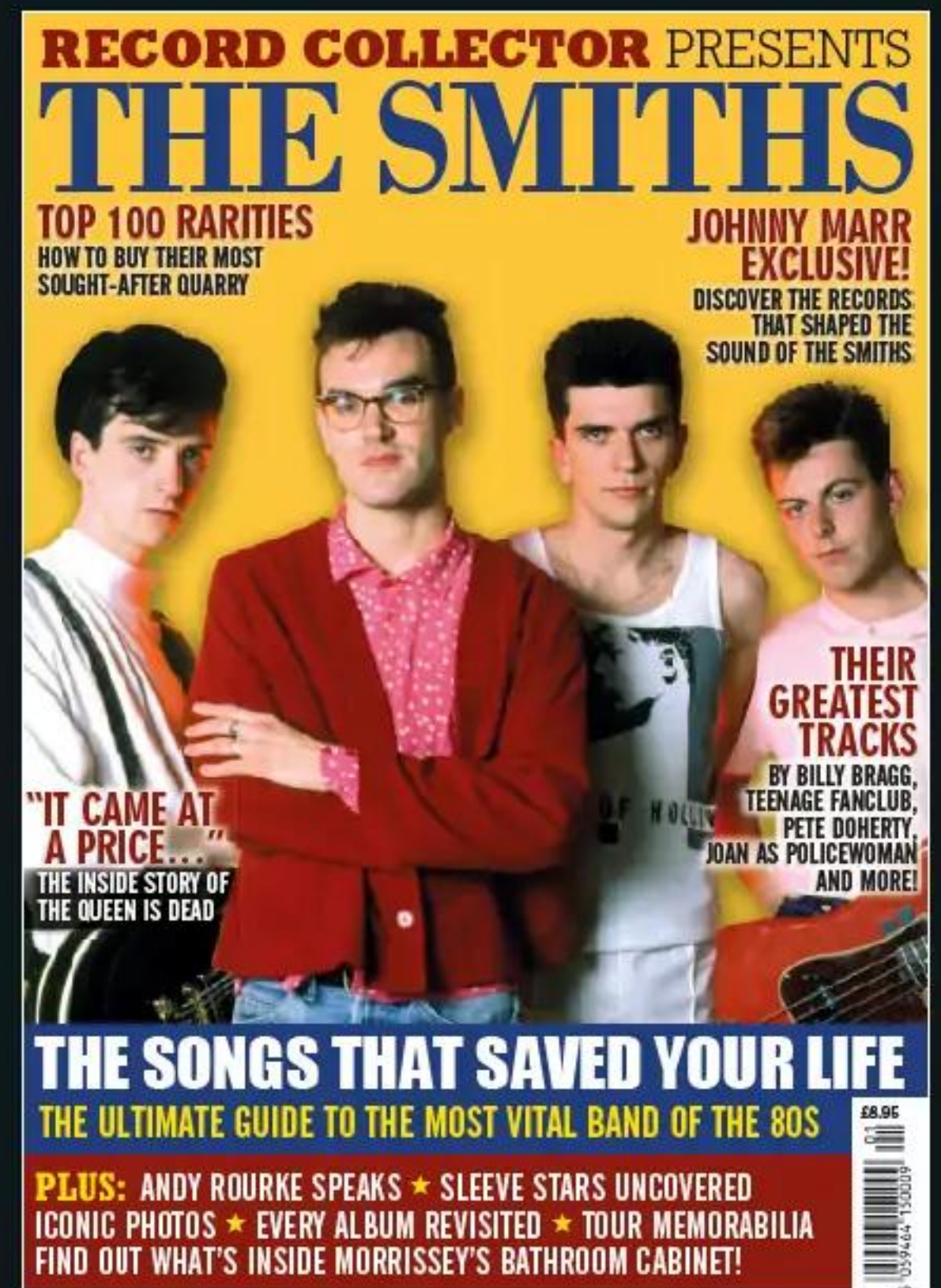
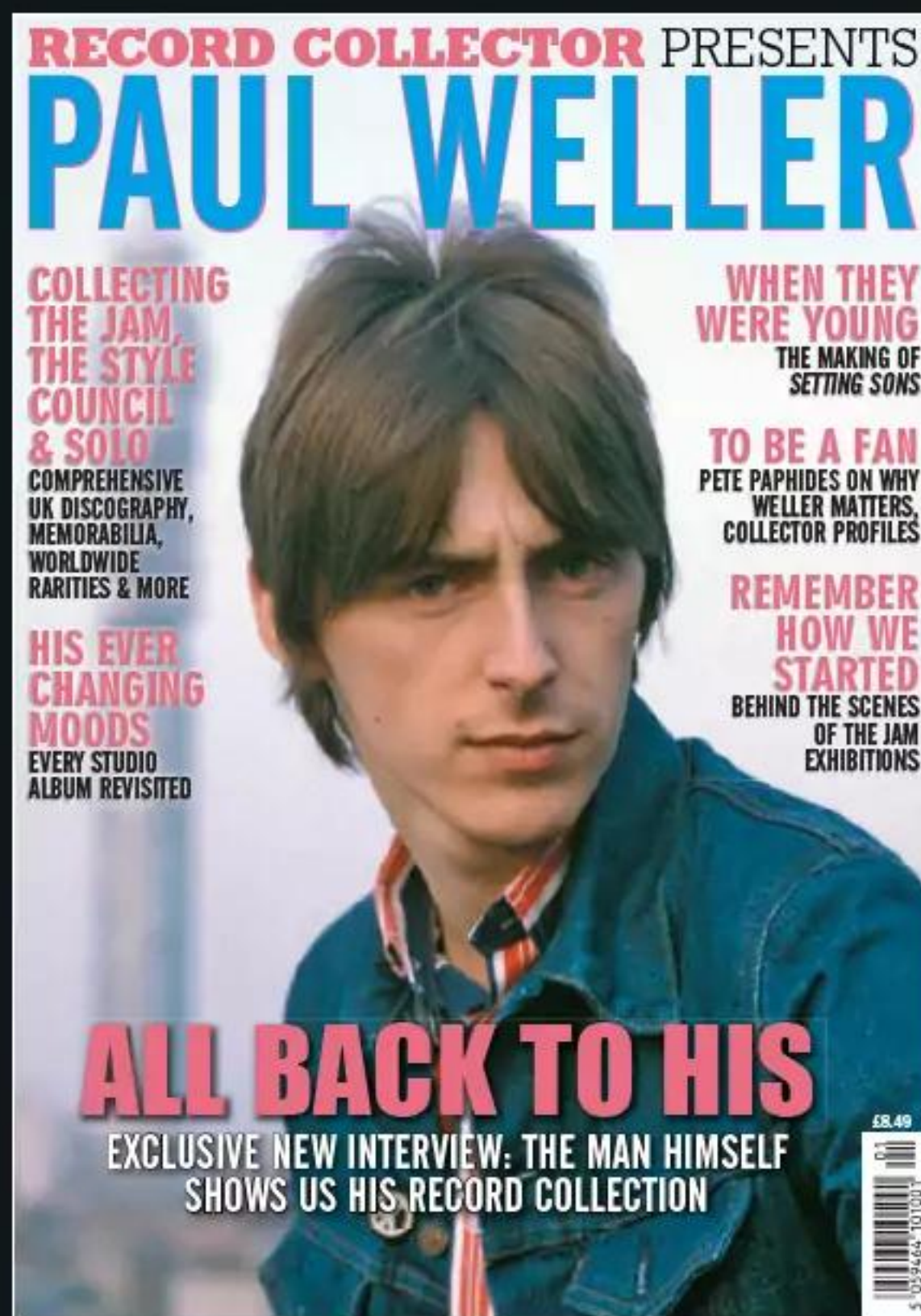
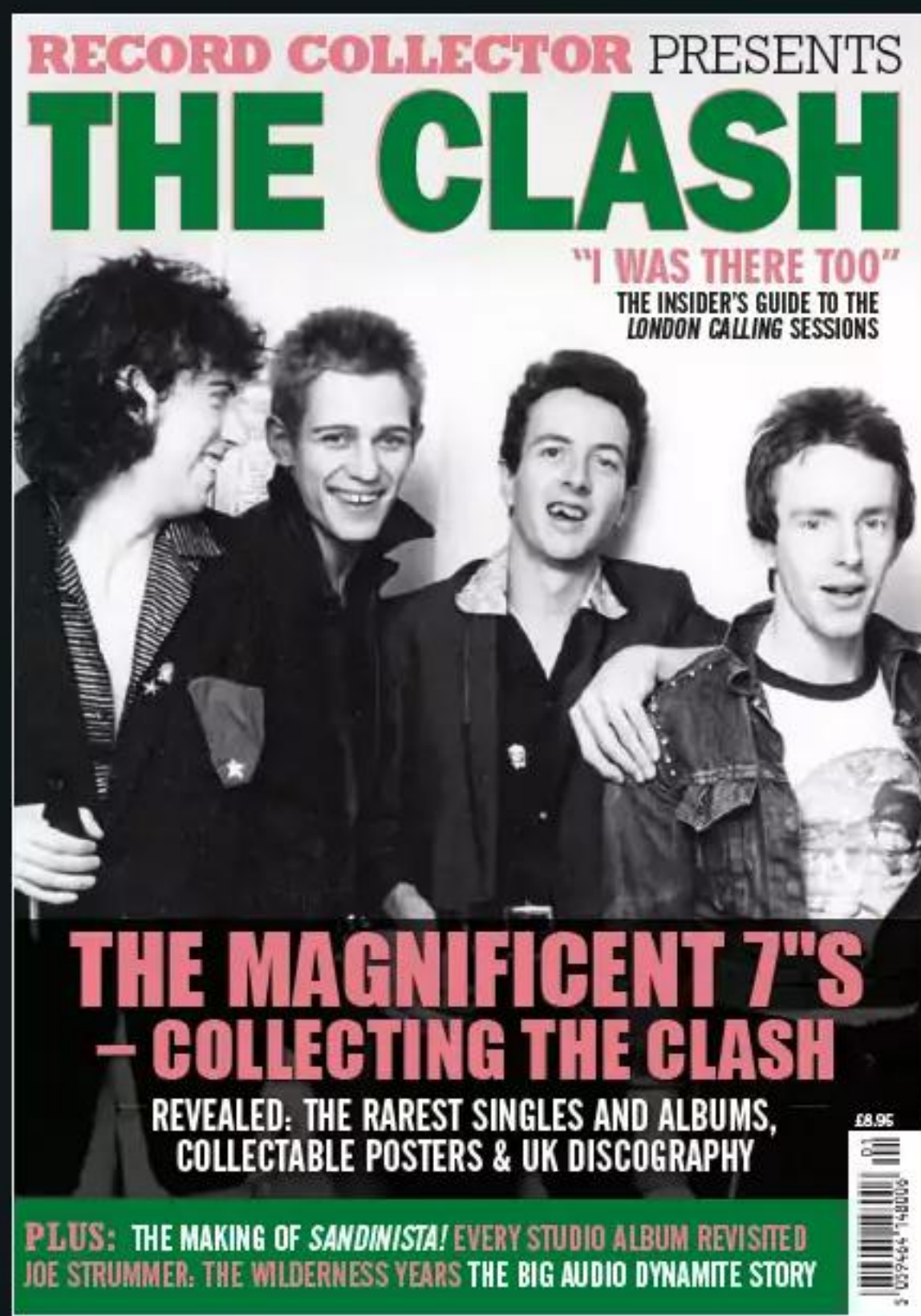
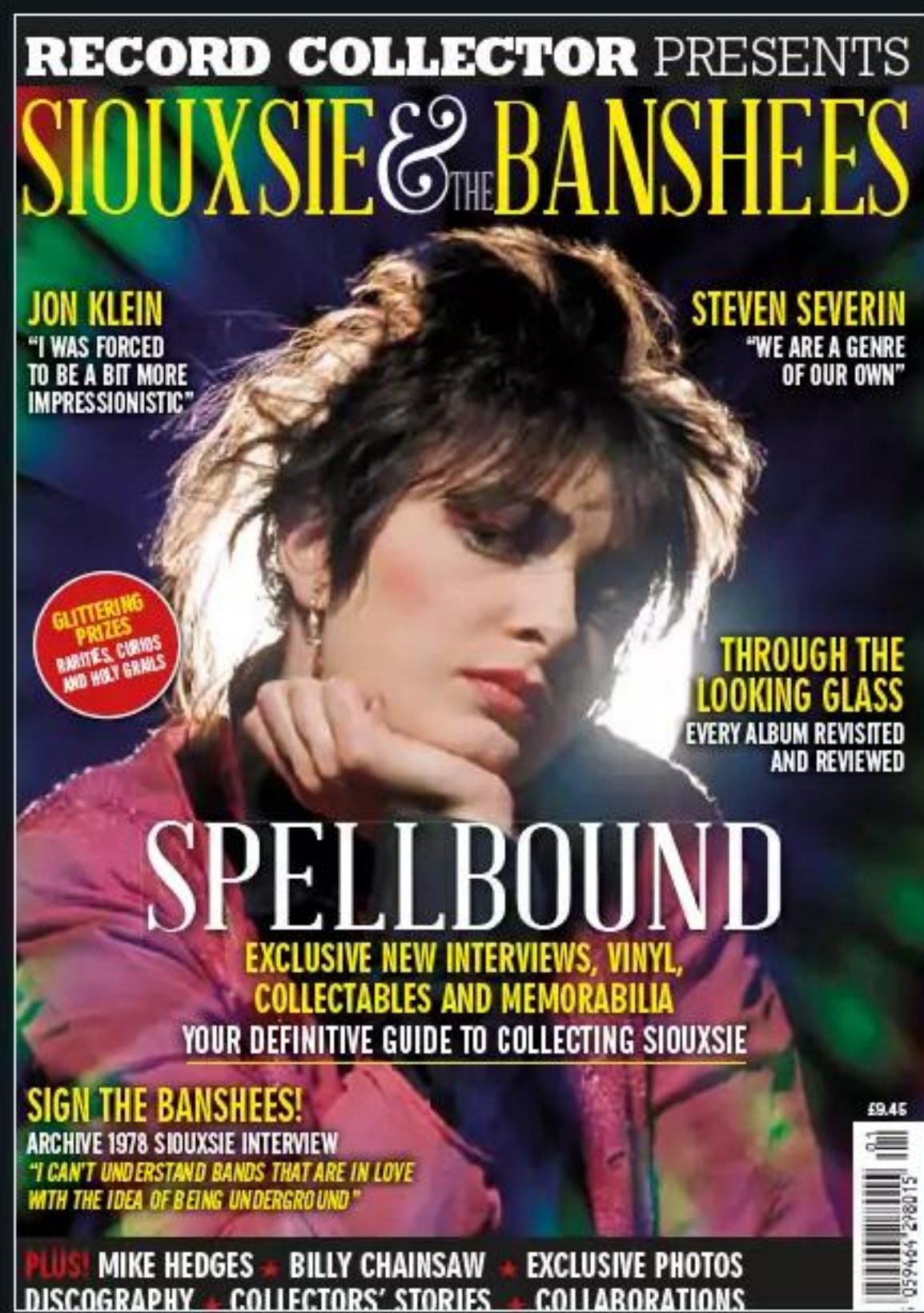
"What an amazing opportunity to perform at Let's Rock .. I had a taste in 2024 and I'm hungry for more. We aim to give the audience a glamorous POP Party."

Can you tell us what else are you planning in 2025?

"More shows, possibly some more intimate ones, semi-acoustic with a Q&A and also some party shows .. where people can go to let their hair down and have a party." ●

Thereza Bazar's Dollar will be at *Let's Rock Festival 2025* in Shrewsbury. Tickets available from myticket.co.uk

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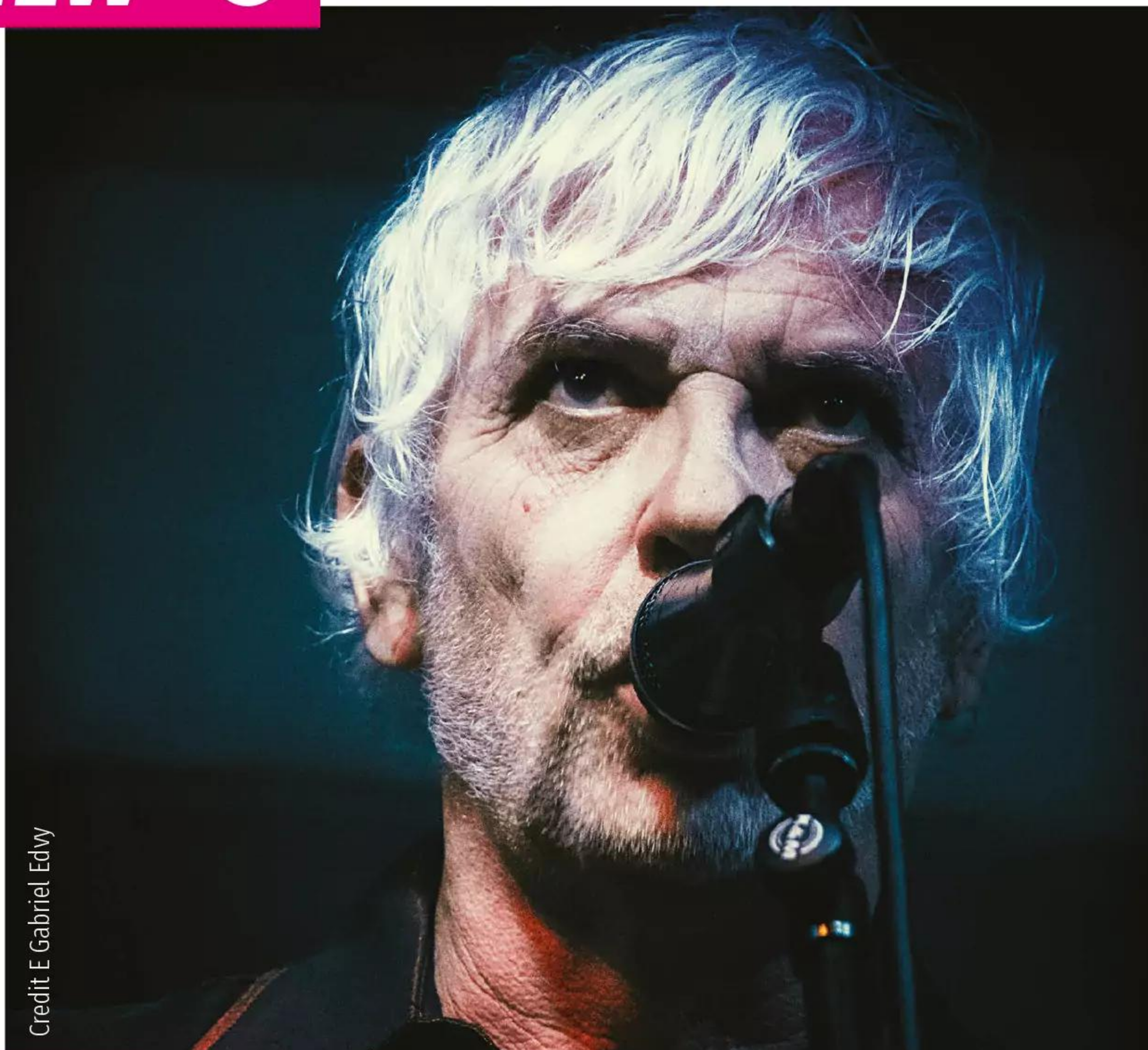
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'UNEARTHING HIDDEN TREASURES' STEVE HOVINGTON (B-MOVIE) INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

From their earliest beginnings in 1978 in the Nottinghamshire market town of Mansfield, new wave band B-Movie have won much critical acclaim from music press and peers alike. Their pensive, understated coolness of broody guitars fused with synthesiser accents, a solid bass and inherent gothic appeal was a formula for commercial success within an emerging 1980s new wave music scene. Their seminal single 'Remembrance Day' started the band along the pathway to surefire stardom and their popularity was gaining some momentum. Their appearance on the legendary Some Bizzare compilation album alongside

Depeche Mode, Soft Cell, The The, Naked Lunch and Blancmange, pointed the way for a bright future. However, their journey of ascendancy was somewhat derailed before a much-awaited debut album could be released. Four decades later, the original master recordings for the 'lost' B-Movie debut album have been unearthed and made available to fans. Blitzed spoke with frontman Steve Hovington, who talked about the major hiccup in the timeline of the band and described what the release of this aptly named Hidden Treasures album means to him.

"We were never a synthpop band. We were a rock band that used synths,

but we had a new wave attitude. I just remember being very surprised that the label chose 'Remembrance Day' as the first single because I didn't think that song was ever going to be a single. I thought it was a bit too gloomy. But it did pretty well, and it got quite a lot of play, so there was a buzz about it. Then it came to recording the second single and our manager Stevo was also negotiating with Phonogram about his other band Soft Cell. They were talking about doing this Northern Soul cover, 'Tainted Love', and it was just one of those songs that hit the kind of zeitgeist of the time and became the biggest selling single that year. Perhaps we should have gone more

electronic ourselves with our second single. We were set to do 'Nowhere Girl' to follow up. But I was concerned we were just being treated like a singles band rather than an album band, which is what I wanted. Stevo had been going on about B-Movie signing the biggest record deal since The Rolling Stones. Well, why aren't we doing an album then? The first single's gone out. It's done better than anybody thought it would be. We should be in the studio recording the album. But it was like, oh, let's go back to the six track EP again and do another song from that. We were 18 years old and I'm thinking I wanted it to be more than just this. I wanted us to get that album out because the music we were making was bigger than just singles. The way things panned out, it looks a bit like we were the fall guys in a way because we got left behind. We had to do as we're told because we're in danger of losing our deal as the second single 'Marilyn Dreams' didn't do anywhere near as well as it could have. It's the classic scenario where the A&R man that signs you leaves, and we were left with this new guy coming in who just didn't get it."

So the label released 'Marilyn Dreams' at a time when synthpop was really starting to make new waves in the UK Charts. Disappointingly, the single failed to register and the momentum of the band was waning by the time the brilliantly infectious pop tune 'Nowhere Girl' was released in late 1982. For many, a classic new wave song, surprisingly it stalled at number 67. By then, the music landscape was awash with bands like Japan, Visage, The Associates, Classix Nouveaux, Gary Numan, Depeche Mode, Robert Palmer, A Flock of Seagulls, and indeed Soft Cell.

We asked Steve his views on why the release of 'Nowhere Girl' as their third official single didn't realise the band's aspirations of attaining commercial success...

"It should have been a hit. I guess we have to consider what was in the charts at the time. Perhaps it was too late, and others were already there. But we'd lost momentum to be honest with you. We seem to have alienated our original audience, those that loved 'Remembrance Day' and that more kind of rocky sound, the student-type raincoat

brigade who listened to John Peel when we were in the Festive 50 and all that. We pitched ourselves now firmly in the pop camp and we were looking at trying to get into Smash Hits, 'Nowhere Girl' might have done better if it was just released earlier. It's a no-brainer really, it should have been the follow up to 'Remembrance Day', instead of 'Marilyn Dreams', but it would have sounded a lot different. That lead line would not have been piano, it would have been synth, and it would have been a different kind of song. We were wanting to go in one direction and the record company wanted to go in the other direction, and we had to play the game in the end because we didn't have a choice. We supported Duran Duran and that was a



We were never a synthpop band



bit of an eye opener. B-Movie were tarred by that brush in a way, record labels would see us as their version of Duran Duran. I remember John Taylor saying that he was mortified when we supported Duran Duran at Nottingham Rock City, when the reviewer absolutely loved

us, but hated them. And John said in a documentary some 30 years later that he still can't get over that interview, even though he's had all that success."

As young as they were in this decade of incredible artistry and innovation, Steve (bass and vocals), Paul Statham (guitar), Graham Boffey (drums) and Rick Holliday (keyboards) regarded themselves as serious musicians and they worked hard to attract a following of loyal fans that appreciated their craft, loved the music and saw something gothic in the DNA of B-Movie that they shared and could be a part of... it was their tribe. But for young men chasing the dream, inevitably there were going to be distractions away from the serious business of music making, and to be fair, you can't really blame them for capitalising on the situation...

"I was surprised when I was asked to be Oh boy! Magazine's page three hunk of the month. I mean, they even got my name wrong. It was like Steve Bovington or something. 'Steve likes cricket and fishing ... Isn't he lovely,' you know? ... all coy and shirtless. [laughs] Paul and I both did the front cover of Oh Boy! funnily enough. You've actually reached that point that girls might be putting your poster on their wall. Of course it was fun, but I wanted to be taken seriously, to be that deep and meaningful, moody kind of lead singer who wrote songs like 'Remembrance Day'."

So the B-Movie timeline was dramatically interrupted, the much awaited 'debut album' never materialised and the tracks were consigned to the vaults of Universal Music for over forty years. What kind of effort did it take to prise the tapes out of their hands and get



Credit Peter Ashworth

//

this is like a ghost that's been exorcised.

//

permission to release the material?

"Andy Woods, an old fan of the band who became good mates and also our business manager, for years has been saying, 'oh, we've got to try and get this 'best of' together', but it just seemed an impossible task. I don't want to get too heavily involved in the business industry side of it. I do know that we are fully entitled to release those songs but the master tapes were owned by companies... Warners, Virgin, Universal, you name it. But there was no person who was individually responsible or contactable, or anyone who could actually track them down. On various platforms, 'Nowhere Girl' had 10 million streams or something, and there's not one of those streams that is the version that we released on Some Bizzare, it just seems daft, really. It was the sheer tenacity of Andy that's been responsible for this release."

B-Movie are a dual-personality band: On one side they have the pedigree of a legacy band stretching back to the 80s golden era of new wave, and on the other, writing new material for a newer generation with modern ears... but there's always been this niggling annoyance in the background that the band never made a debut album. It has been a sort of obsession with the band, particularly Steve, who thinks that maybe they were cheated out of reaching their full potential. It must have been incredibly exciting getting the opportunity to listen to these songs that were created with so much enthusiasm and love some four decades ago. So what was it like when Steve got to hear the compositions that he thought were lost forever?

"I heard them in their very raw, rough state and we needed to polish them a little bit, you know. They were unmixed,

and I don't think the tapes were in a particularly good condition either. Andy knows a guy called Roger, who's a producer and an artist he's worked with. He took the tracks and, apart from the three Some Bizzare singles that stay pretty much as they were, remixed them. I was just utterly blown away with what he did to be honest, I never imagined that they would sound as good as that. The energy's there, and the attitude is there. I think it showcases the band. We had some very fine melodic moments, and I think it stands up as an album from the day very well. I had completely forgotten that these songs existed. So it's like discovering Tutankhamun's tomb, really, archaeological remains from a bygone era. You could say it sounds a bit poetic and cliché-ridden, but it feels like a bit of yourself that's been lost as well. These songs represent the sweet spot in the band's career. This is like a ghost that's been exorcised."

Now the treasure trove of lost B-Movie songs has been unearthed, how will they begin getting them out there for people to enjoy? Will there be plans to perform the tracks live?

"Absolutely. We're looking at three gigs coming up. There's been quite some interest, reviews, some national newspaper interest and also we are hoping to get airplay on national radio. We are sort of fairly small scale really,

compared to a lot of bands these days when it comes to social media, but we have a loyal fanbase around the world waiting for this. We're selling physical merch too."

There is absolutely no hiding the excitement, enthusiasm and pride practically bursting out from Steve for this Hidden Treasures album. It represents a true snapshot of what B-Movie were about to become in an era that should have been kinder to them for sure. One listen and you are instantly transported back to 1981, eavesdropping on the fresh faced next-big-things of new wave. The story is fascinating and yet in the blink of an eye could have been oh so different. Steve describes the importance of the Hidden Treasures album...

"The album is essential for fans. If you're a true fan of the band, you really do need to listen to this. It represents the most productive era in the band's career. It's what could have been in some ways. It might shatter a few people's preconceptions about us, thinking that we're some sort of lightweight new romantic band you know, because it's certainly not that. I think the rocky edge really comes through quite loud and clear on this. We are a living, breathing, rock band." ●

For news of the 'new' album and live shows visit www.b-movie.org



Credit Steve Hovington

B-MOVIE

HIDDEN TREASURES

WANDERLUST

By Paul Browne

The history of music is littered with stories of bands who, despite best intentions, seemed to elude the success they deserved.

Hailing from Mansfield, B-Movie were a band who certainly deserved a higher profile during their tenure, particularly as they were part of the original Some Bizzare stable alongside the likes of The The, Soft Cell and Blancmange - who all, of course, carved out their own legendary status during the 1980s.

During these early years, B-Movie fell on the radar of Phonogram, swept up on the back of the band's appearance on the iconic Some Bizzare Album. Although, as legend has it, the deal was based on label supremo Stevo's insistence that Phonogram also sign Soft Cell as a package deal. This arrangement unfortunately later coincided with the synth-pop duo's release of a certain Northern Soul cover version...

In hindsight, B-Movie were perhaps an unusual fit for the Some Bizzare label, a band that largely eschewed the overt synth-pop sheen that other acts on the label embraced. "B-Movie had quite a traditional line-up" commented B-Movie vocalist Steve Hovington in the Some Bizzare book *Conform To Deform*, "especially compared to other Some Bizzare bands, and we were definitely more psychedelic. We had touches of electronica in there, but we were more into experimenting with sounds."

Despite earnest efforts with a series of single releases (and finally an album in 1985), B-Movie called it a day in 1986. In a different universe, the band would have prospered on Phonogram and released the planned debut album that they had originally been working on. Fortunately, we can get an idea of how that alternate history would have sounded with the release of *Hidden Treasures*, an album which gathers together those 'lost' Phonogram recordings. Retrieved from the archives, the end result is ten tracks that includes B-Movie's classic singles of that era alongside previously unreleased



recordings. *Hidden Treasures* then is a showcase for the band's approach to music as it was in the early years of the 1980s. As B-Movie have since reformed and are doing a storm with live shows, this release is also quite timely.

The classic B-Movie singles are, of course, all present and correct here. The regimented beats of 'Remembrance Day' (which had been the band's first Some Bizzare single release after signing with Stevo), the swirling synth moods of 'Marilyn Dreams' and the compact pop appeal of 'Nowhere Girl' (a firm Rusty Egan favourite back in the day).

But there's plenty of other tunes on *Hidden Treasures* to surprise and delight. Album opener 'Citizen Kane' has touches of Joy Division lurking in its motorik beat. There's also a more dance pop direction on tracks such as the funk-tinged 'Ice'. Then there's the strident 'All Fall Down', a moody outing driven by throbbing bass.

B-Movie's penchant for brooding gothic pop is also evident on the percussive album closer 'Beginning To Fade'. *Hidden Treasures* also serves up other unexpected gems, such as the fractured pop of 'Polar Opposites' and the breezy 'Crowds', a synth hook-laden delight which brings to mind early Wild Swans.

Hidden Treasures is also generously augmented by a wealth of bonus tracks which include extended versions, B-side tracks and the raw energy of B-Movie classic tune 'Moles' (the track which the band contributed to 1981's *Some Bizzare Album* release).

B-Movie's legacy may, essentially, be simply to be viewed as one of the great 'lost' bands of the 1980s. But despite this, *Hidden Treasures* (which can be viewed as an alternative 'debut' album) serves up a fine collection of psychedelic pop gems. ●



Photo by Sean Scheidt

'PLEASE BE UPSTANDING'

GLENN TILBROOK & CHRIS DIFFORD [SQUEEZE] INTERVIEW

by Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Squeeze began their new wave rock journey in Deptford, 1974, when eager musician Glenn Tilbrook replied to a postcard advertisement looking for a guitarist in a sweet shop window. The band quickly developed throughout the 1980s, writing a series of hit songs such as 'Cool for Cats', 'Up the Junction' and 'Labelled with Love', and very early on were getting comparisons to the song-writing legends Lennon and McCartney. Blitzed were delighted to spend some time with founder members Glenn and Chris and find out more about them.

Were you exposed to music very much as a teenager and who were your influences and idols when you were growing up?

CD At school I was either listening to The Who or I was listening to King Crimson. So, I was sort of straddling both fences really. A good friend of mine, Eric, was into King Crimson and I kind of fell into that because I enjoyed the lyrical content of it. I found it very mystical and very strange.

GT My parents played music in the house a lot, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, they were into their jazz, and it made a big impression on me. Later I grew to love The Monkees and then The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and T-Rex, so I was always

enthralled and fascinated by music.

When did you first start to become interested in writing and performing your own music?

CD We didn't have a school band, and we didn't have music lessons particularly, but it was an ambition that I had quite early on. I was very lucky to be able to form a band with Glenn, and we did for five or six years become a pretty strong gang.

GT I wrote my first song when I was 11, and I used to get Record Songbook, which was just printed lyrics of the songs, the hits of the day, and I'd learned how to play



Photo by Kurt Sinclair-Hall

those. I was self-taught, I just pretty much put my own tunes to them.

Were you already friends when you started the band, did you just know each other and things sort of fell into place?

GT Chris put an advert in the sweet shop window, looking for a guitarist... to join his band that had a record deal and were touring Europe. It was all a lie, of course. Chris has always had a vivid imagination, that man. But I applied and it was a great meeting, because within a few weeks we started writing together, and we wrote a lot in the first three years we were together.

CD Glenn had been at school with Jools Holland, so they'd already kind of become mates and he introduced me to Jools. We had a couple of local people, one guy playing drums, another guy playing bass, but it was all very loose and, you know, we were leaning on the sort of hippie movement at the time.

Was there an instant chemistry between you and Glenn, even at that time? Or was that something that you gradually developed as you got to know each other?

CD There was. There was also the camaraderie at the beginning that was unchallenged, and it was kind of sweet really, because I think we were both scrambling around trying to find our feet

Chris has always had a vivid imagination

as writers. I don't think we really knew anything other than what we discovered in the room with each other, and I think there's a lot of beauty in that kind of relationship when you're young and you're sort of holding on to each other trying to find an exit door, you know?

GT Yeah, we just hit it off, and I think our influences were different enough that it made something more interesting maybe than if we both liked exactly the same things.

How hard was it, before you got your first album together, getting gigs for the band?

CD Well, in those days there were lots of pubs and lots of places to play, so we were really lucky. I wouldn't like to be starting a

new band now, it's much harder, but back then there were three pubs in the High Street where we lived that we could play in, and we did. We actually had a residency in a local pub three nights a week. I mean, we were only playing to our mates, to be honest, but it was good fun, and we got served free beer. So, what was not to like?

Can you remember your first television appearance?

GT I think it was Top of the Pops, with 'Take Me I'm Yours'. We were kind of all over the place, we all had different images. But the thing that bound us together was the music and the ambition. Of course, miming was pretty standard then, so we had no choice. But growing up watching Top of the Pops... it was really such a thrill to actually be there.

The second album, Cool for Cats, obviously spawned the hits 'Cool for Cats' and 'Up the Junction'... did you feel as a band you were pretty invincible with those hits under your belt and with the album doing well commercially?

CD Well, it seemed to us at the time that as soon as we had a hit, we were on the other side of the world. We would be in America or Australia, so we didn't really get to mince about the High Street and have people slap us on the back. By the time we got back, the records had died a death. It was good, from an emotional point of view, to know that you'd had success and that it was actually all right. And I think the thing that it did for me was it made my parents aware that I actually had a proper job.

Well, who would you say, if you can, is the most gifted musician in the band?

CD Well, I would have to say Glenn. He is an extraordinary guitarist and an amazing singer. He dedicates himself to his performance. He's a perfectionist. So, I would say he is the best overall musician.

GT Oh that's very nice, thank you. I think it's more the energy of what we can do together that makes Squeeze now the band that it is, you know. Honestly, we've never been better than we are now, and if that's from all sorts of points of view. I love the old Squeeze, but I never want to go back to that because what we have now is just so special.



Are there any particular Squeeze gigs that stand out over the years, that, for good or bad reasons, are more memorable?

GT I have to say, the first time that we played Madison Square Gardens was pretty good. I was 24 or 25 and it was just such a massive adrenaline rush. I've had a love affair with America for many years though.

CD I suppose it's a cliché to say, but Glastonbury is always already an amazing moment. But then so was the Albert Hall last year when we played that. I think we manage to make every show a home for us now. It's got to this after 50 odd years, it's become something that we do extremely well. We're very lucky I think.

Are there any Squeeze songs that are more troublesome than others to perform live?

CD Well, there used to be, but not anymore. I think with the onset of an iPad on stage with the chords written out, I can kind of get through most things. But in previous days, it would have been hard work playing some of these songs and most of my early touring career was spent with my amplifier turned right down!

The Squeeze lineup has changed, understandably, over the years. What's the dynamic like on stage now with the current line up?

CD Yeah, but once you start playing those songs, you become a part of the whole in some way. And there's an unspoken chemistry that binds everybody together. It's an incredible gift and I'm very proud of that. I'm very proud of the songs.

GT It's really the best it's ever been. I think we have a really great team of players and singers, and we can really deliver a brilliant show. I know that by the way an audience reacts to us.

Over the years, Squeeze broke up in 1982, reformed in 85, disbanded again in 99, reformed again in 2007. It looks like Squeeze is just one of those bands that just has to be. Must be something in the DNA, that you just have to be together.

CD Yeah, I think those periods away were very huge learning curves for all of us, particularly Glenn and me. We would go off and do our solo projects and coming back to the band was always in the back of my mind, but it had to be a natural kind of coming together. And I think for the next couple of years we've got tours booked and we've got two albums coming out, and projects to work on... so I'm pretty sure for the foreseeable future Squeeze is going to be on one stage or another. The songs are crafted, they're looked after, they're maintained, they're like vintage cars, really. We get them out of the garage every now and again, polish them up and they still sound good.

GT We've had our share of ups and downs. I think we sort of lost our way a bit as a band, but since we've been back together it took a while to find our feet, but we have. But with the personnel changes we've been heading towards the ideal lineup, and that is exactly what we have now.

Squeeze are performing at the Summer Nights Festival at Caldicot Castle in Wales on 3rd August. What is it about

// we didn't really get to mince about the High Street //

performing at festivals that you particularly like?

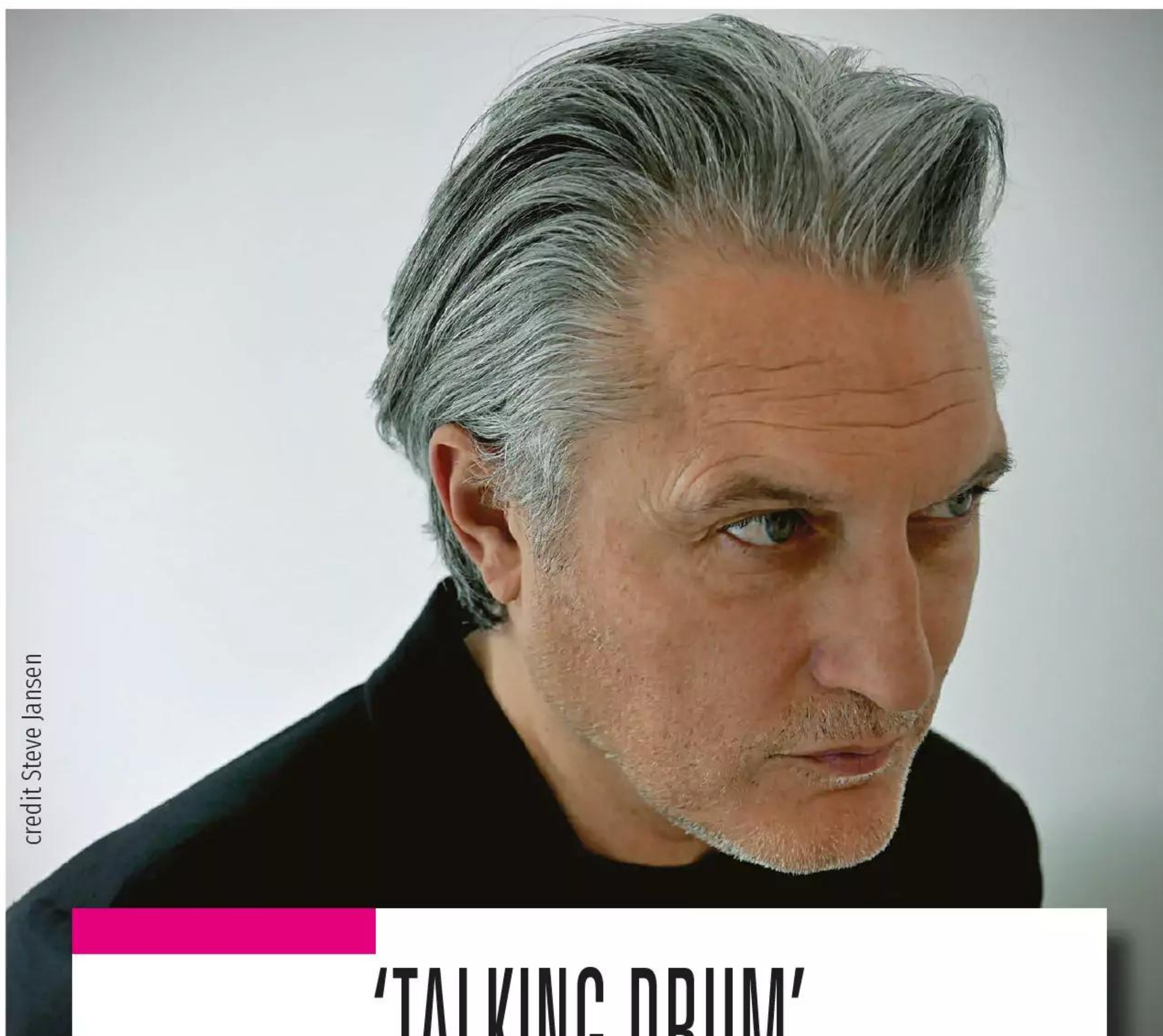
CD Yeah, we're looking forward to this, we love festivals. We're very lucky. I mean when we played Glastonbury last year, there were 70 or 80,000 people in the field at midday when we went on. I was shocked, really, and I was really pleased because it was a very grey, cold morning and the audience warmed us up.

GT It's great to have a large, diverse crowd of people loving what you do, and seeing them go crazy and see us react to that. Always a really great experience I think. And I'm looking forward to the show at Caldicot Castle, and also Wales, I have special connections. I was named after a Welshman who actually looked after my mum during the Second World War when she was evacuated. A really sweet man. All the Squeeze clothes are made and designed by Aidan Sweeney, our fantastic tailor from Brecon. He is one of the best. He's a lovely man, a very talented man. And we are all excited about the Summer Nights gig too. Can't wait. ●

Squeeze are performing at the Summer Nights Festival at Caldicot Castle on 3rd August. Tickets from myticket.co.uk



Credit: Scott Saldinger



credit Steve Jansen

'TALKING DRUM'

STEVE JANSEN INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Formed in 1974 by brothers David Sylvian and Steve Jansen, together with bass-guru Mick Karn, Japan were a pioneering glam/art-rock band that welcomed the exciting emergence of synthesised sound with open arms, bringing in Richard Barbieri on synthesisers and Rob Dean's signature lead guitar to forge an unmistakable sound and image. Japan dominated the new wave and synthpop landscape in the UK during the early 1980's. Drummer for Japan, as well as drummer/vocalist for The Dolphin Brothers, solo artist, photographer, and since 2014 an active member of music project Exit North, Steve Jansen chatted with Blitzed Magazine about his fascinating music career and what he's up to now.

What are your earliest memories of being interested in playing the drums?

"Playing drums came as a result of

trying to be a left-handed guitarist. Not realising I could re-string the guitar in reverse, I struggled with the chord shapes shown in Bert Weedon's "Play in a Day" guitar guide. I was around 12 and I'd always favoured my left hand for writing, although I used my right hand for school sports such as fencing and tennis. I guess for that reason, the fret board was, to my mind, the 'weapon' end of the instrument. So, as fate would have it, I gave up the guitar, and after a brief stint at keyboards (a borrowed cheap plastic Rosedale electric organ) I opted for rhythm. I settled for being the Mickey Finn of our Tyrannosaurus Rex. I was probably bashing away on bongos for more than a year. The larger being the bass drum, the smaller the snare. I was getting my head around understanding rhythm. I got my first drum kit aged 14 and by that time playing came quite naturally to me... as a right-handed player, no less. I think

my ambidextrousness (ambidexterity) certainly made me the type of person to get his head around different limbs doing different things."

Who were your early influences that helped forge your style and sound?

"Initially a real eclectic mix of what was going on in the charts. Glam pop bands alongside reggae, soul and disco, it was all happening. But more importantly, probably in my second year of starting out, the real influences came more from album tracks of US bands such as Alice Cooper, Television, Patti Smith, Lou Reed and many more. As I matured, drummers with Brand-X, Stanley Clark, Jeff Beck were all blowing my mind. But at the same time, Kraftwerk and electronic minimalism was also taking hold."

Mick was always making people laugh

When did you realise that you and your brother David could make proper music together?

"I think in our own minds that was much earlier than others would have considered "proper". At the age of about 12 or 13 (1973) we recorded on a portable cassette, both on guitars, stomping on a Formica sheet under our feet, and overloading the recording level to sound distorted. In our minds we were close to 'Revolution' by The Beatles."

When you first encountered Mick Karn, what were your impressions of him as a musician and also a person?

"Mick would come around the house to listen to records. Once he realised we were trying to make our own music he was keen to join. Since I was about to get my first drum kit, we concluded bass would be the right choice for him. He had

// it's the rehearsals where the hard grafting is done



some previous musical experience due to learning the bassoon at school and adapted to bass quickly, and he decided to go fretless, and that's where he began to define his own style. Mick was always making people laugh and was a very naturally warm person. That was my first impression, (pretty much everyone's throughout his life) however there was a more complex person underlying his extrovert character."

Can you recall the first live performance as Japan? How did it pan out?

"It was on July 4th, 1974, at Mick's brother's wedding. I've no idea how it panned out, I think we were just horrified to be onstage. Mick and I had barely been playing a month. My guess is that the wedding party were either sniggering to themselves or holding their ears."

The change in style from the first two albums to *Quiet Life* was dramatic. What was your feeling about the new direction and sound?

"In those early years everything centred around live performance because that's all we really knew, apart from recording a few demos. The first album was virtually our live set. This was also the case more or less with the second album. By the time *Quiet Life* was being conceived, we set about writing and arranging songs in rehearsal rooms without ever having performed them live. So, we went into the studio with a strong framework for each track, but they were open to some interpretation and experimentation. If it wasn't for the huge success we'd had already, the record label wouldn't have been so generous with a third album budget. But here we were, in the top studio in London with many weeks to



Exit North by Josanne van der Heijden Fotografie&Design

make an album. Luxury! We had a lot of fun recording *Quiet Life*, probably the peak of our enjoyment in working together. The direction felt much more accomplished as we'd shed the immaturity of the previous two albums and started to develop a more subtle and elaborate sound."

You had great success with *Quiet Life* and *Tin Drum* and some amazing tours. Why did it all come to an end?

"Differences in ambitions. Not a lot else to add really apart from the sense that we'd all be happy to work apart for a change. We actually split up end of '81 but were persuaded to make a last tour, live album and video. So it was a long process that took time to implement, and by the time the last show came, almost a year later, there wasn't any regret."

What would you say have been the highlights of your time with Japan?

"Probably recording. We spent so much time in the studio. At 17, most people my age and of my background were a little lost for direction, but for the next 5 years I was fortunate enough to be in the recording studios, rehearsals rooms or touring. This was my apprenticeship and defined my expectations about the work I do. Most events have been a highlight in some form or another, because at the time I'd throw myself into what I'm doing wholeheartedly."

After Japan, you continued working with Richard Barbieri as *The Dolphin Brothers*, with you taking over vocals. Were you happy coming out from behind the kit and being the front man?

"No, not at all. It was a challenge for

me, and I took it on as a recording project only. I would never have performed live because I don't believe I have the voice for that. Nor the confidence. Obviously I never mentioned that to the record label!"

You supported David on tours, back to playing drums and percussion again. Was the on-stage dynamic very different without Richard, Mick and Rob?

"Playing with different musicians always brings about a different dynamic. I think that's the whole point of changing a line-up. I've been fortunate in that all the performers I've worked with outside of Japan have been very talented and a joy to perform with. Whoever the band leader is, they have a responsibility to make sure everyone's on track. When I've performed solo or with my group Exit North, it's effectively like a producer's role, there's much more pressure felt than there is simply being a hired musician without any bigger concerns. But with all tours, it's the rehearsals where all the hard grafting is done. Once you're beyond the first performance you get into a routine where all of the intense rehearsals start to pay dividends."

When did photography start to emerge as a real pleasure for you?

"When I purchased a Canon A1 SLR camera. Prior to that I'd been dabbling with various 'fun' cameras. The answer to this question is described in the forward of my book, if I may quote myself in this abridged version: 'I had a tendency to record and document events, partly born out of the nature of my job and partly because I felt that life was showing and teaching me things so fast that I knew no matter what I did, I was bound to miss



Steve Jansen - credit Steve Jansen

much of it. I developed a particular urge to pause events, capture moments and take notes, before they expired forever. I started writing a journal from the age of nineteen and photography was somehow running in parallel to this as well as recording music. Forms of documenting: Storing. I had no masterplan except to have a backup. In essence, some recall. Experiences were rushing past like landscapes on a speeding train. I, and the people who surrounded me were highly attuned to visual appearance. It wasn't for the purpose of pretence or image; it was a real and vital identity. A decisive leap away from suppression and control. We became colourful people, yet also quiet and private. I mostly wanted to capture in monochrome. Although I didn't understand it at the time, the absence of colour makes a more compelling statement and an intensity, whereby something different emerges, something more soulful. This is where I found the connection. Despite travelling the world, which kindly provided an ever-changing backdrop, monuments and buildings weren't something I needed to document because they would always be there. What I felt mattered was the relatively short lives that were shining bright in the foreground, naturally projecting themselves out of the everyday."

In 2014 you formed a new musical alliance with three Swedish musicians, Exit North. You have released two albums to date and have a new EP on the way. How did you get together and what makes this band work so well?

"I had established a co-writing connection with Thomas Feiner in 2007 for my first solo album Slope. He co-wrote

'Sow the Salt.' For my second album Tender Extinction, he co-wrote 'Captured.' We felt we had similar motivations in music, and in 2014 we welcomed the idea of forming a more permanent and committed partnership. There is a patience and attention to detail with the band members that I find rare to come across these days. It's closer to my early recording years with Japan than any other situation I've been involved in. Studio time not being an issue, having no label breathing down our neck, and no commercial aims other than releasing a body of work we're proud of. Our new E.P. Harm/Terms is a slight departure from previous material. More energised,

aggressive. These compositions are from Thomas and myself only, as the core members of the band. As the sleeve notes explain... Lyrically, the songs address corrosion by resentment. Deep, raw wounds and the seeking of scapegoats. Holding up a mirror to the face of violence and manipulation. We wanted the music to reflect the accumulation of tension-building up and teetering at that tipping point, beyond which nothing looks the same."

What are you planning in the near future?

"More live shows, hopefully. And then an album release... eventually. I had two photography exhibitions in Japan in January. One featured the images from my book Through a Quiet Window - (musicians photographs). I may be holding a follow-up in Beijing, late June. The other exhibition was a set of images I shot in Shibuya, Tokyo in 2022. You can see the images at www.stevejansen.net/newauctiongallery. I made a sound installation for that event titled "The Space Between" which is now on release. www.stevejansen.bandcamp.com/album/the-space-between". ●

For all info on Steve Jansen's creations including Exit North: www.stevejansen.net



Japan credit Stuart McLeod

LEIGH BOWERY!

AT TATE MODERN UNTIL 31ST AUGUST 2025

'THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES'

by Marc Massive

Leigh Bowery, artist, fashion designer, musician, performer, night club host and provocateur is the subject of a major retrospective at the Tate Modern in London to mark the thirtieth anniversary of his untimely passing on New Year's Eve 1994.

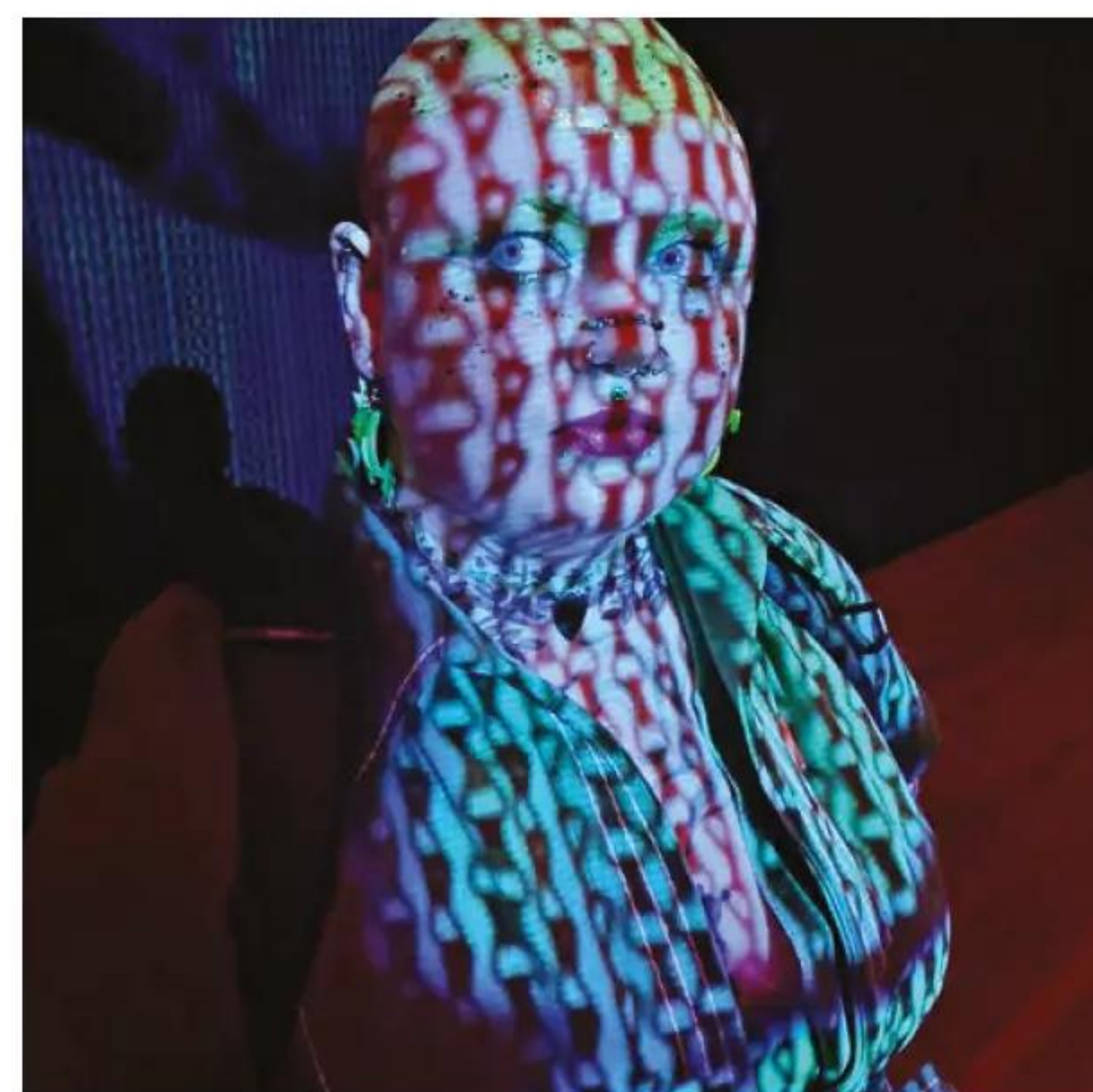
Arriving in London at the start of the 80s, with his heart set on becoming a famous fashion designer, Leigh Bowery found notoriety wearing out his outrageous creations to gay nightclubs in the city's seedy underbelly. By the mid-80s, the underground went mainstream thanks to Leigh and his creative cohorts. They started a movement, ran clubs, formed bands, designed clothes, made films, leaving a shocked and offended Thatcherite Britain in their wake. They made inroads into the stuffy establishment with appearances on prime-time BBC, and were featured in all the trend-setting magazines of the day. They were the cool club kids with something to say and the talent to deliver it. Alongside the likes of dancer Michael Clark, filmmakers John Maybury and Baillie Walsh, corsetier Mr Pearl and DJs Princess Julia and Jeffrey Hinton all feature in the countless polaroids and artefacts on display. We get the essence of the night time world they inhabited, with Leigh a statuesque Emperor in new clothes, the figurehead of the movement.

The grand size and scale at the Tate provides a space worthy of the magnitude of Leigh's work, whilst echoing his favourite habitat, the nightclub. As I'm guided through consecutive rooms in chronological order, I'm reminded that without Leigh I would not have had that first leg up the showbiz ladder. One night in 1989, Leigh saw me voguing through the window of a restaurant I worked at on Shaftesbury Avenue. To alleviate

boredom, I'd entertain the passing Japanese girl tourists through the window whilst handing out the menus. Leigh mentioned me to his friend, singer Caron Geary aka MC Kinky, who was looking for two dancers for her new single 'Everything Starts With An E'. Hot footing it down with a 12" white label vinyl under her arm, she offered me the job based

on Leigh's recommendation alone. A connection that makes this exhibition all the more emotional in its depth.

Giant video projections show Leigh's infamous appearances on film and TV, including BBC's *The Clothes Show*, wearing a fun fur *Après ski* outfit and catwalking through a busy Harrods' tea room to the sound of Divine's 'You Think



Lauryn Photo: Marc Massive



Fergus Greer Session 7, Look 37, June 1994 (c) Fergus Greer, Courtesy of The Michael Hoppen Gallery



You're a Man', beautifully eccentric whilst exemplifying Leigh's incredible journey and colourful rise to prominence, from discos to artist's muse, we build up a picture of Leigh's defiance in the face of conformity through his shape-shifting appearance and creativity. His strength in overcoming anti-gay rhetoric and hostility surrounding AIDS in the 80s, a big disease with a small name that he would sadly later be diagnosed with in 1988. Choosing to keep it private from friends and acquaintances, only confiding in his close friend Sue Tilley and later his wife Nicola Rainbird and confidant Lucian Freud, the famous master painter for whom Leigh had become a life model just a few years before his death.

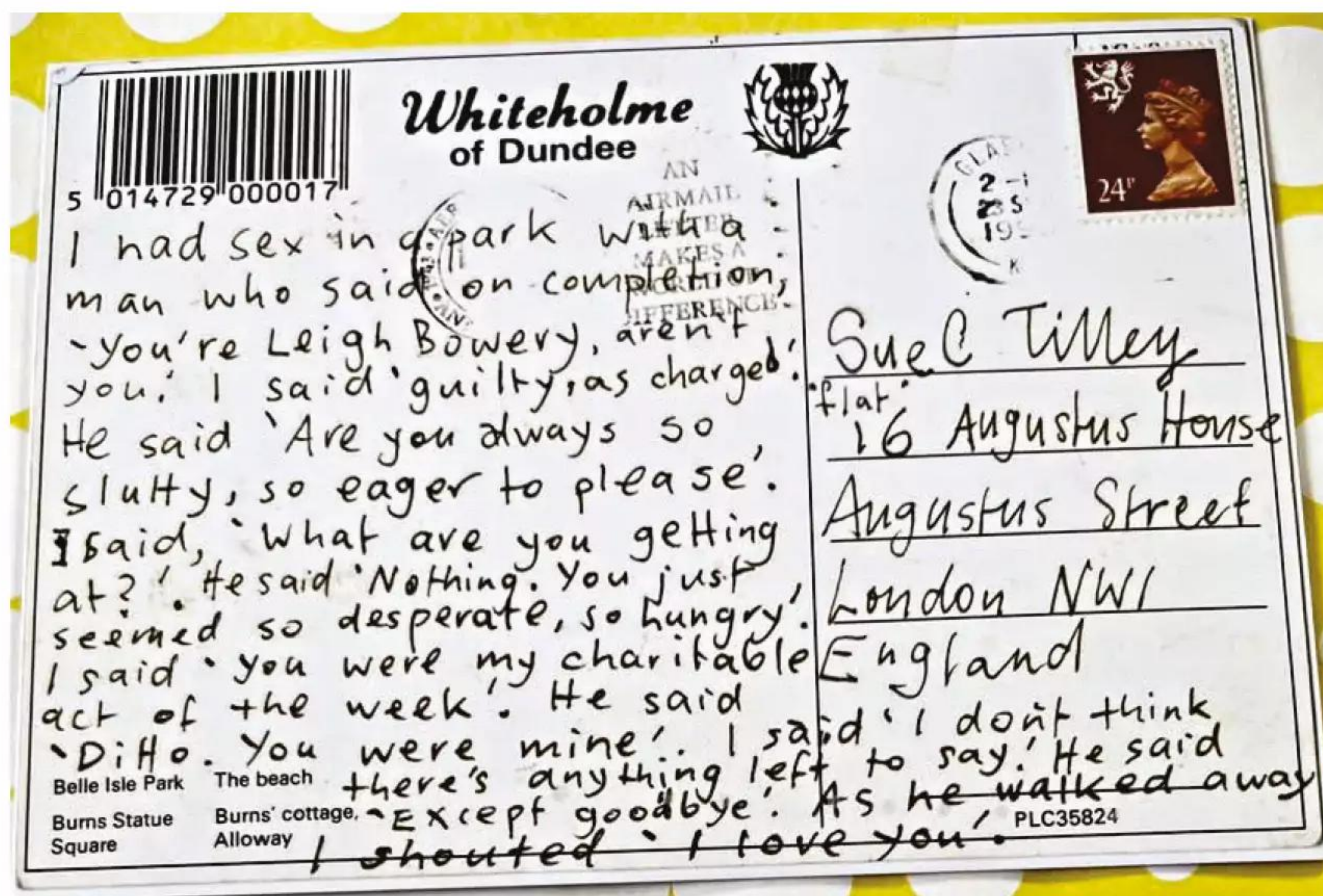
This final collaboration is well represented here, with several of Freud's paintings present, normally commanding an exhibition of their own, here a complement to Leigh's body of work and validating his artistry. Each paint stroke on canvas demands closer inspection across every inch of Leigh's nakedness, evoking imagined conversations between artist and muse, being true to the Freudian name, perhaps Leigh divulged

the news of his diagnosis in return for Lucian's wise words and friendly advice, unburdening some of the pressure during those long painting sessions. Freud's daughter Bella recalls Leigh becoming not only a great friend, but being part of their family, and how impressed her father was by Leigh's performances. Lucian's painting 'Fragment of Head of Leigh' which remained uncompleted due to Leigh's passing in 1994, serves as a poignant reminder of what might have been had he not succumbed to a disease that over a decade later would for many become a treatable condition.

The curation honours Leigh's determination to be remembered as a creative visionary and not someone who had AIDS, an underlying anxiety fuelling the secrecy of his diagnosis. His magnificent designs, outlandish outfits, and through exploration of the naked body, we find an artist equally as authentic both in and out of clothes. Across twenty mannequins, resplendent in multicoloured trademark PVA glue drips down their bald heads. We start to appreciate the discomfort Leigh must have tolerated to bring his walking art

to life, whilst exploring the extremes through which he pushed his body. The corsets bound tight to contort the extra ripples of flesh and push forward an impressive bust. His penis often gaffer taped and tucked between thighs and covered with a furry merkin, making trips to the toilet impossible. Shoes precariously stacked inside each other to create height and presence, no doubt aiding Leigh's love of a dramatic dance floor tumble. Giving birth to wife Nicola live on stage proved no mean feat, clinging to his body, hidden by clothes from an unsuspecting audience, till the moment of maximum shock value, as Leigh positioned himself, legs akimbo, releasing a new born Nicola, covered in fluids as she flopped to the floor in several legendary performances for his band Minty, who's swear infested single 'Useless Man' helped earn them the tabloid headline 'The Sickest Band in the World' a badge of honour in Leigh's eyes. Shock and awe never too far from Bowery's mind, but not limited by it, is evident around every corner of the exhibition. Documentation of his notorious enema-induced douching of the audience at an AIDS benefit in 1990, where a wardrobe malfunction resulted in a huge controversy, "Performance had problems which I turned to my advantage. Shat on the audience. Stole the whole show" Leigh noted in his diary.

It's these artifacts that make the exhibition for me, the original diaries displayed in glass cases alongside the private postcards sent to his collaborator and future wife Nicola Rainbird and best friend Sue Tilley, whilst touring in the company of the British "enfant terrible" of ballet, Michael Clark for whom Leigh not only made the outfits but also performed in the productions. These A6 pieces of card, tell titillating tales of forbidden sexual encounters in public toilets alongside traditional 'wish you were here' sentiments, similar to Joe Orton's diary sexploits. For Leigh, sexuality was not some shameful addiction to be hidden away from a disapproving and judgemental society. Echoing my belief I had first-hand experience of Leigh's gymnastic abilities whilst cottaging in a notorious Marble Arch public convenience in the late 80s, where his considerable under-stall



pro prowess and agility could overcome any obstacle that stood in the way of his quest for sexual gratification, and becoming the stuff of nightclub folklore.

The exhibition will have its detractors, and not be everybody's cup of English tea. A review dismissing the work as 'just friends dressing up, going out, getting drunk and sniffing poppers' completely missing and trivialising the struggle of identifying as queer in the 80's, a lack of acceptance was our everyday reality back then. Leigh's work reflects the time it was made in, by choosing to rebel and revolt through the image he created, a visual protest more provocative than any gay rights March or political rally. We shouldn't underestimate the Tate Modern's bravery for hosting an exhibition like this in these current climes, when we're seeing a return to ambivalence and hatred of minority groups like the LGBTQ+ and non-binary community. A chilling rerun of the 80s AIDS paranoia, spread by a bigoted gutter press and harmful political legislation like Clause 28, which only fuelled Leigh's transformation out from the shadows into the disco monster terrorist we celebrate today.

Testament to his legacy is the abundance of next generation 'freakily' dressed club kids and fashion students in attendance for both the preview and opening day of the exhibition, which proves Leigh's influence on today's creatives. I asked Lauryn (27) who works with textiles, the same question originally asked by Dick Jewell in his film of Leigh's

1988 Anthony D'Offay's gallery 'Mirror' performance 'What's your reaction to the show?'

"I haven't been to an exhibition as fun as this before, you could feel the love in the curation for Leigh. It was such a joy walking around to see and feel a big acceptance for raw queer expression and art. Especially with the political climate right now. It took me a while to feel comfortable in my skin but fashion like this has been a big help in that journey. Lauryn agrees that Leigh was something of a trailblazer ahead of his time; "I started shaving my head to recreate some iconic looks, which has fed into my punk-esque style over time. I'm genderqueer myself and Bowery has

always spoken to me. Growing up, I was the chubby weirdo who thought I couldn't wear certain things because of my size or gender stereotypes, I wanted to fight or didn't feel comfortable in. I remember the first time I was introduced to Bowery and thinking how beautiful I thought they were, highlighted more with a humorous 'freakish' approach and that stuck with me.

Coming to the Tate to see the show has been a dream for a lil bedroom queer, motivating me to get sewing and face painting more."

Close friend and fellow Freud muse, Sue Tilley, whose memoir Leigh Bowery - The Life and Times of an Icon has just been reprinted to coincide with the exhibition, alongside Nicola, wife and guardian of the Leigh Bowery estate, have both been instrumental in keeping his legacy alive. I ask Sue what she thought Leigh might be doing now if he was still with us

"Heaven knows, he'd be 63, I don't think he'd be dancing like a dervish on the disco floor. But I think he would be attending events, becoming a sort of social commentator, but who knows, anything could happen to Leigh and he'd embrace it and make a success of it!"

Leigh's private postcards to Sue being one of the highlights of the exhibition, made me wonder, if she could send Leigh a postcard about it, what would she write? ●



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TIME LORDS AND TAPE LOOPS

THE WONDERFUL AND FRIGHTENING WORLD OF THE BBC RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP

By Steven Swaby

On a gloomy November evening in 1963, something very strange happened to Britain's television sets. They began emitting a weird, rhythmic and creepy sound. This unearthly signature tune heralded the debut episode of a new family series called Doctor Who. It was destined to become a cultural phenomenon and the world's longest-running sci-fi TV show.

From that moment, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop was synonymous with Doctor Who for three decades. Their soundscapes, eerie manipulations and weird noises became as much a part of the show's DNA as Daleks and Cybermen. The sound of Doctor Who was a crucial part of what made it quite unlike anything else on TV: unearthly, unsettling and atmospheric. The Workshop's

contributions added immeasurably to the sense of mystery and otherness that made a trip in the TARDIS so memorable and sent generations of kids scurrying for safety behind the sofa.

The unit's roots went deep at the Beeb. It was established in 1958 as part of the BBC Music Studio in Maida Vale, London, on the site of a defunct ice rink; a building remembered with rueful affection by Workshop pioneer Brian Hodgson as "a mildewed wedding cake". The unit was populated by a small, shifting team of eccentrics, musicians and composers. Their brief was to create special sounds for radio, and increasingly, TV. They were incredibly prolific: at its peak, the Workshop was delivering more than 200 commissions a year.

In those early days, incidental

soundtracks were often a combination of library music and the work of a commissioned composer. The Radiophonic Workshop would treat the score and add to it, their soundscape interventions and signature tune treatments painstakingly built-up from individual sounds. Adopting musique concrète techniques, they recorded with reams of quarter-inch mono tape, segments recorded at half speed and laboriously chopped together using razor blades. Swoops were created using old valve oscillators and all kinds of special sounds were generated by freewheeling experimentation. Corks popping, bathtime ablutions, a corgi dog and clashing cutlery were just a few of the source sounds recorded and eagerly manipulated by team members.

An obvious example is the trademark 'wheezing, groaning sounds' made by the Doctor's TARDIS on take-off and landing. Famously, this was created by Brian Hodgson running his mum's front door key along the bass strings of a piano. Ingenuity using limited resources was a defining trait of the Workshop's output – this was sampling, decades before sampling became a thing. That Doctor Who signature tune is another prime example. For once the word 'iconic' isn't wearily out of place here. Composed by Ron Grainer, it was handed to Delia Derbyshire and Dick Mills at the Workshop to have their deviant way with it. By 1963, Grainer was firmly established as the master of the signature tune, having composed a string of memorable themes for films and hit shows such as Steptoe & Son and Maigret. He was seen as a safe pair of hands by conservative, officer-class management at the BBC, but he was also keen to experiment. Grainer was so delighted with the Workshop's



Image PA BBC



credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall at Coventry Music Museum



Credit BBC

treatment of his handwritten Doctor Who score that he proposed Delia Derbyshire receive half his composer's royalties to fully acknowledge her contribution. This didn't happen in the end, ostensibly due to her job title, but also because this was the 1960s and Delia was a woman.

Like many of her colleagues, Derbyshire worked on other projects outside her BBC day job. She collaborated with Brian Hodgson and David Vorhaus on much-loved cult LP *White Noise - An Electric Storm* (1969), and was a member of Unit Delta Plus. But she was becoming increasingly disillusioned, by BBC bureaucracy and newer technology that left tape manipulations behind. Hodgson and Derbyshire both left the Workshop by 1973. It entered a new phase of experimentation under the experienced guidance of Dick Mills. Arguably this reached its peak on Doctor Who during Jon Pertwee's tenure as the time travelling Time Lord, when the veteran comedy star portrayed the Doctor as part James Bond, part Professor Quatermass, and refreshed the show for a new decade (now in colour, kids!).

Putting this period in context, at exactly the same time, bands like Pink Floyd, Genesis and Suicide, and hairy young Germans such as Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream and Neu! were all beginning to experiment with emerging electronic tech. And a rum-looking bloke calling himself Eno stole the show performing with Roxy Music. People were taking note, duly inspired to start prodding electronic instruments to see what weird noises they could make. The sound of the future was evolving. Meanwhile, equally hairy BBC composer Malcolm Clark was also busy grappling with the new EMS Synthi-100. Using this enormous piece of kit, Clark created a soundtrack of bizarre, abrasive squelches

and buzzes for Pertwee-era story 'The Sea Devils'. The results were memorably described by Workshop alumni and latter-day custodian Mark Ayres as "like a nervous breakdown in a shortwave radio factory". Ayres was still a schoolboy when 'The Sea Devils' was transmitted in 1972, but exposure to this outré soundtrack was an epiphany that shaped his future career. Talking to *Electronic Sound* in 2023, Ayres recalled, "I loved everything that people hate about it now. The fact that, half the time, you can't tell the sound effects from the music. The fact that it's completely batshit insane. It's the sound of a complete anarchist maverick fighting with a piece of technology that doesn't really work properly... at that point, I decided it was what I'd quite like to do."

But this time the sonic envelope had been pushed a little too far for BBC tastes, and things were reigned in considerably after 'The Sea Devils' aired. Tristram Carey's score for 'The Mutants' (1972) took a more measured approach, mixing electronics with a more conventional score, and as the 1970s progressed, the prolific Dudley Simpson became de facto house composer on Who, with scores that favoured woodwind and brass melodrama over weirder electronica.

The Workshop kept pace with technology in the 1980s, armed with shiny new kit such as ARP synths and even a Fairlight. Their output remained a central component of Doctor Who beyond Tom Baker's record run in the title role – from revamped theme tune to sound effects – until the last Classic Series episode aired in 1989. To coincide with Doctor Who's 30th anniversary in 1993, an album compiling some of the Workshop's sound effects for the show was released. This 'greatest hits' disc included bangers such as 'Fendahl

Shuffle And Slobber' and 'Dalek Hit By Baseball Bat'. They don't make 'em like that anymore. In a way, this album was a valedictory transmission for the Workshop. After 40 years' service, it quietly closed for business in March 1998. When Doctor Who returned to our screens in 2005, its incidental scores, often composed by Murray Gold, went full cinematic and eschewed electronic space oddities. Inevitably, the TV landscape had changed beyond recognition by that time, and so had the technology used to create music. But if anything, the Workshop's legacy had continued to grow, resonating far beyond an older, nostalgic audience that grew up on Doctor Who and other BBC children's shows. Since the 1990s new generations of musicians have also connected with this pioneering body of work, fascinated by how those sounds were made, and in thrall to the analogue nature of it all. Surviving Workshop members occasionally played live dates together, and in 2023 the 'mother of electronica' was celebrated in Cosey Fanni Tutti and Caroline Katz's wonderful docu-drama *Delia Derbyshire: The Myths And Lost Tapes*, which presents a richly bittersweet portrait of the outsider sound pioneer.

Today, new vinyl pressings and lovingly curated box sets are putting the Workshop catalogue back in print. And Mark Ayres continues to curate its legacy, while still experimenting with sound creating new Dolby Atmos sound mixes. Check out his work with Workshop fans Orbital on their *Optical Delusion* album, for a start. The fruits of the Workshop's labours are now also available as part of an online archive, and even as plug-ins. As The Higsons once observed, 'It Goes Waap!!!'. With the Radiophonic Workshop, it also goes bleep, burble and a whole lot more. Nearly 70 years on, the temple of sound continues to unsettle, beguile and inspire. ●

SOME LIKE IT HOT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE POWER STATION

Of all the solo and side projects to emanate from the Duran Duran inner circle, it's The Power Station whose music probably remains the most celebrated. Their eponymous debut album turned 40 in March this year, providing the perfect opportunity to look back at how the distinctive, unerringly bold release actually came about.

The roots of The Power Station were established at the end of 1983, when Duran Duran's guitarist (Andy Taylor) and bassist (John Taylor) saw Chic drummer Tony Thompson playing with David Bowie in Sydney. After bumping into Thompson at a party, both Taylors found they got on well with him, and the trio decided that at some point they must talk about making some music together. That opportunity came a few months later at the beginning of 1984, when Thompson got in touch asking the Taylors to come and meet Chic's bass player, Bernard Edwards. "We explained to Bernard that even though we were already in a band, we were thinking of moving sideways with some of our music," recalled Andy in his autobiography *Wild Boy*. "I wanted to retain certain values of Duran Duran [who by this point were one of the biggest bands in the world], but I felt it was time to change the rhythm of our sound and be a bit more creative, with a harder guitar edge". Thompson and Edwards were happy to get on board, and by late 1984 they were in England recording a cover of T-Rex's 'Get It On' with Andy. At this stage, the idea for the project (tentatively called *Big Brother*) was that it would be a supergroup of sorts, with the Taylors, Thompson and Edwards making up the backing band, and different singers joining them for each track.

Of course, this was not quite how the

project played out. Having recorded some further demos (with John Taylor, this time), the final permanent member of the band was secured in the form of singer Robert Palmer, who had already known the members of Duran Duran for a number of years. In the midst of The Power Station starting up, John Taylor found himself sitting next to Palmer on a plane. "I told him about The Power Station project," writes John in his autobiography *In The Pleasure Groove*, "Robert was enthusiastic and wanted to hear what we'd been working on". Playing him a cassette of their instrumental demos, Palmer came up with

combination of Thompson's thunderous drums, Andy's muscular rock guitar, John's relentlessly funky bass lines, Palmer's soulful voice and Edwards' rhythm-oriented production resulted in a dense, hugely powerful sound that rarely let up in its potency. Three singles were released from the album - 'Some Like It Hot' (written by the Taylors and Robert Palmer), 'Get It On (Bang A Gong)' (a version of the T-Rex track that Andy, Edwards and Thompson had originally demoed together) and 'Communication' (the track for which Palmer had devised lyrics in a matter of minutes when sitting on the plane next to John).

Both the first two singles and the album itself were significant chart successes - but unfortunately, it was not to last. In the wake of their success, the band decided to organise a headline tour of America, playing with Nik Kershaw, OMD, Paul Young and power-pop outfit The Bongos. It was at this point that Robert Palmer announced his departure from the band, on the back of the highly successful solo album (*Riptide*, which featured the global top 10 single 'Addicted To Love') he had recently recorded with the help of Thompson, Edwards and Andy Taylor. Actor/singer Michael Des Barres was chosen as Palmer's replacement for the Power

Station tour, but the band soon folded, with John Taylor returning to Duran Duran, Andy Taylor departing to pursue a solo career, Thompson playing drums for a reformed Led Zeppelin, and Edwards continuing to take on production duties for various hit artists. The band briefly reformed in 1996, but they were never able to recapture the raw, powerful magic of their eponymous debut, which still remains an entertaining listen - even 40 years later. ●

Imogen Bebb



lyrics for one track on the spot, prompting John to have him brought to the band's recording studio (The Power Station studio in New York, from which the final name of the band derived) to try him out as a singer. The band felt such a chemistry playing with Palmer that they decided to record the entire album with him, and The Power Station in its complete form was finally born.

If you had to use one word to describe the band's self-titled debut, the most appropriate would probably be 'big'. The

THE SHAPE OF THE UNIVERSE: A SOUVENIR OF INSIGNIFICANCE

ZTT RECORDS, 1985, LP/MC

Classic record label ZTT didn't release many film soundtrack albums during their history, one of the few being 1992's *Toys* by Trevor Horn and all his friends. So, *Insignificance* is a rarity indeed. The alternative-history drama film was directed by Nicolas Roeg (1928-2018) and dealt with four 1950s icons meeting in the same hotel room with two of them discovering they have more in common than they ever anticipated. It starred Gary Busey as "the ball-player", Michael Emil as "the professor", Theresa Russell as "the actress" and Tony Curtis as "the senator" and was a nominee for the Palme D'Or in Cannes in 1985. It won the Cannes Technical Grand Prize. The film was adapted by Tony Johnson from his 1982 play of the same name.

This album is not your average 1980s soundtrack album full of radio-friendly hits. As it says on the cover, it's really more of a "souvenir" from the film, with an eclectic mix of musical styles and artists. There is dialogue between most of the tracks, for better or worse, and much of the music are selections from the original instrumental score composed by Stanley Myers and now legendary film composer Hans Zimmer. German Zimmer started working with father-figure Myers as a 24-year-old in 1982 and had gained a few years of experience when *Insignificance* came around. It's interesting to note how Myers and Zimmer seem to work separately, not together, a way of dividing work they did mostly all through their 1982-1988 companionship, before Zimmer went to Hollywood after *Rain Man* and they worked on individual projects. They had already scored Roeg's *Eureka* in 1983, and would also score 1986's *Castaway* for the same director. Of course, Zimmer was (and still is) an expert with electronic music, and his three cuts on this album are examples of that. The track called 'B-29' should be of interest for fans of *Frankie Goes To Hollywood*, as it's almost like an instrumental remix of that classic tune. Of course, Hans Zimmer had played with Trevor Horn in *The Buggles*, so

perhaps this was an in-joke at Sarm West London where this album was assembled and edited by Paul Morley? It also features some screeching guitar by an unidentified performer. Zimmer's two other selections, 'Remember Remember' and 'World Of Theory', are more in the ambient genre, with the latter (with shakuhachi flute by Paul Hirsh) having elements of Steve Roach and Michael Stearns, showcasing a style Zimmer wouldn't really revisit much in the following 40 years of his career.

The tracks by Stanley Myers are mostly in the jazz genre, with 'A Dog Of A Night' bearing an uncanny resemblance to Ira Newborn's big band theme from *Police Squad*, of all things. Myers is also sounding very old school classical in 'Relativity One And Two And Three'. The remaining four tracks of the album consists of Roy Orbison's 'Wild Hearts' produced by Will Jennings (who recently passed away), actress Theresa Russell's jazzy 'Life Goes On', Gil Evans' And His Orchestra's woodwinds-only arrangement of Mozart's 'Jupiter Suite', and contemporary pop stars

Glenn Gregory (Heaven 17) and Claudia Brücken's (Propaganda) duet 'When Your Hearts Run Out Of Time' with Midge Ure performing on keyboards.

This soundtrack album never got a CD release, it only received a vinyl and cassette release, and it has never been re-issued. It would indeed be interesting with a CD version of this, now at the 40th anniversary, with comments by Hans Zimmer and Paul Morley about how this album came about. The booklet is in the usual ZTT style, with more or less nonsensical writings (who wrote that stuff? Paul Morley himself?) and a nice fold-out cover with pictures from the film. Hans Zimmer would of course go on to become the planet's most popular film composer, while Stanley Myers sadly died of cancer in 1993, only 63 years old.

So, we say with the last paragraphs of the *Insignificance* booklet, in good Zang Tumb Tuuum tradition:

"And so we might say coming out of *Insignificance*, we were only on our way to this exit after all, an end which refuses the end." ●

Jon Aanensen





'2 PUNKS AND A TAPE MACHINE'

TWIN NOIR INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall

TWIN NOIR is a new wave/EBM/electropunk duo founded in Berlin in 2021, consisting of Cody Barcelona (voice, electronics, guitar) and Ian Volt (voice, bass). Their music is brooding and uber-cool with expansive atmospheres, and melodic interludes. They use analogue synthesis and guitars, together with a reel-to-reel tape machine and a theremin, to create their sound, combined with minimalist satirical lyrics in German. The influences of both musicians range from bands like Kraftwerk and DAF to the German EBM and Techno scenes, as well as punk and rock from the 70s to 90s. Blitzed Magazine got to speak with Cody and Ian at the start of their comprehensive 2025 European Tour.

We got to hear about you and your music when we visited the producer Mark Reeder in Berlin a few months ago. He is a big fan of your music and was very complimentary about you. How do you know Mark?

CB: "We've always loved Mark Reeder's work, especially the records he made with Die Unbekannten, which had a huge post-punk influence on our music. Our friend Bernd, who is very active in connecting people within the scene, invited Mark to one of our shows in Berlin. After the show, we met Mark, and from that moment on, we became friends."

IV: "Mark Reeder's documentary 'B-Movie: Lust & Sound in West-Berlin 1979-1989' is, in our eyes, an incredibly important film about the German post-punk scene and Berlin in the 1980s—a masterpiece! From this historical perspective, it is an honour for us that Mark attends our shows and that we stay in close contact with him."

How and when did you both meet to form Twin Noir?

CB: "Our story began over a decade ago when we met while touring with different bands. However, it wasn't until

the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2021 that we reconnected in Berlin. We started jamming together in the streets, at places like Alexanderplatz and Oberbaumbrücke in Kreuzberg. We quickly realized our musical chemistry, and that led to the formation of TWIN NOIR."

Had you both been in many other bands previously?

IV: "Yes, since we were young kids, both of us have been involved in various bands, which enriched our experiences and influenced the sound we bring to TWIN NOIR."

Who have been your main influences and heroes from when you were teenagers?

CB: "We're both big fans of English punk and goth music from the '80s. The Rats, The Clash, Sex Gang Children, and Bauhaus had a huge influence on us. But also, German bands like Kraftwerk and DAF, along with the EBM and techno scenes, as well as international alternative

Photo by Florian Kehbel



and rock genres from the '70s to the 2000s, have shaped our sound."

What is it that makes you two work so well together as Twin Noir?

IV: "Our shared vision and approach to creating and thinking about music enable us to craft songs that deeply resonate with both of us—and with our audience. We also love celebrating this connection in our live shows. After all, we've both been part of the live music scene from a young age."

Of course, there are three of you in the band. The tape machine is at the centre of everything. Does it have a name? And do you take a spare on tour?

IV: "No, the machine doesn't have a fixed name—we've used different ones over time, especially since some of our old tape machines failed on tour. When we travel by bus or car to our shows, we always bring one along, as it's also a visual element of our stage performance. However, traveling by plane makes it difficult because the machines are simply too heavy. In that case, we have an amazing visual show where the machine regularly appears, keeping it an integral part of our performance."

When you're writing songs, how does the process work between you? Do you have a set formula for who does what?

CB: "Our songwriting process is fluid and collaborative—we might start with a guitar riff, a synth line, or a lyrical idea. We both contribute to all aspects, letting creativity flow naturally without strict roles."

Congratulations on putting together yet another comprehensive European tour.

That must have taken an awful lot of research and planning. Is that something you are both heavily involved with?

CB: "Thank you! Yes, we'll be playing in over 13 countries and doing more than 45 shows this year, just like we did last year."

IV: "We have divided our roles within the band. Also, Alina from Twin Noir Records plays a major part in the business side of TWIN NOIR."

When you record and perform, you sing in German instead of English, which is lovely to see as we get the true sound of what you were thinking when you wrote the songs. Did you ever consider singing in English?

CB: "We started the project singing some songs in English and some in German. During the pandemic, we left Germany for six months and toured in Mexico, playing 15 shows. The Mexican audience—which is amazing—went crazy for our German songs. At that moment, we realized we didn't have to sing in English to tour internationally. We also realized that writing in our mother tongue is more unique and exciting for our artistic work."

IV: "That being said, our latest album includes an English song called 'Death Comes Easily'. With us, anything is possible."

So many bands come to the UK and play just one date, usually in London. But you're playing Glasgow, Manchester, York, Bristol, and London. And it's the fourth time you've been over here. The UK must love you already?

IV: "Playing in England has always been a dream for both of us - it's the motherland of punk and goth. One of the most incredible nights in our band's history took place in Nottingham. What a night!"

CB: "Touring England as the support act for the legendary Sex Gang Children was also a very special moment for us. After our London show, we were even featured on BBC Radio 6 by Iggy Pop on his show 'Iggy Confidential' because someone from the BBC had attended our concert and loved it."

IV: "As a German-speaking band, being welcomed with so much love in the UK means a lot to us, and we are truly grateful for it."

When the gig is over, are you party animals, or is it an early night to get some sleep?

IV: "We balance our post-show activities based on our schedule and energy levels. While we enjoy connecting with people from the scene, we also recognize the importance of rest to maintain our performance quality throughout the tour. We love to be 100% fit and in shape for our live performances so we can enjoy them and give our best every night!"

A 45-date tour sounds like it would be mentally and physically exhausting. Do you have to get in shape for it? Lots of early nights, staying hydrated, and workouts at the gym?

IV: "Touring is indeed demanding. We prioritize our health by maintaining a balanced lifestyle, which includes proper rest, good food, hydration, and physical activity, to ensure we can deliver our best performances every night."

Chapter 2 is a fabulous album, and you can hear quite a few influences in there—from electronic, EBM, and punk to techno. Do you have a favourite song to perform live?

CB: "Thank you. 'Schwarze Katze' and 'Ostkreuz' have become favourites in our live sets. Both are driving, energetic, and highly danceable, which has improved our live show tremendously."

Are any of the songs not so easy to perform on stage?

CB: "We take our time to rehearse every song thoroughly before playing it live. By the time we step on stage, everything is at 100%."

When you get to the end of such an extensive tour, on the last night, what kind of condition are you in physically and emotionally?

IV: "When we come home from touring, we usually meet right away to write and record new songs and work on new ideas. So we never fall into a creative slump. We love both sides of making music, being on tour and working in the studio." ●

For further information visit www.twinnoir.com

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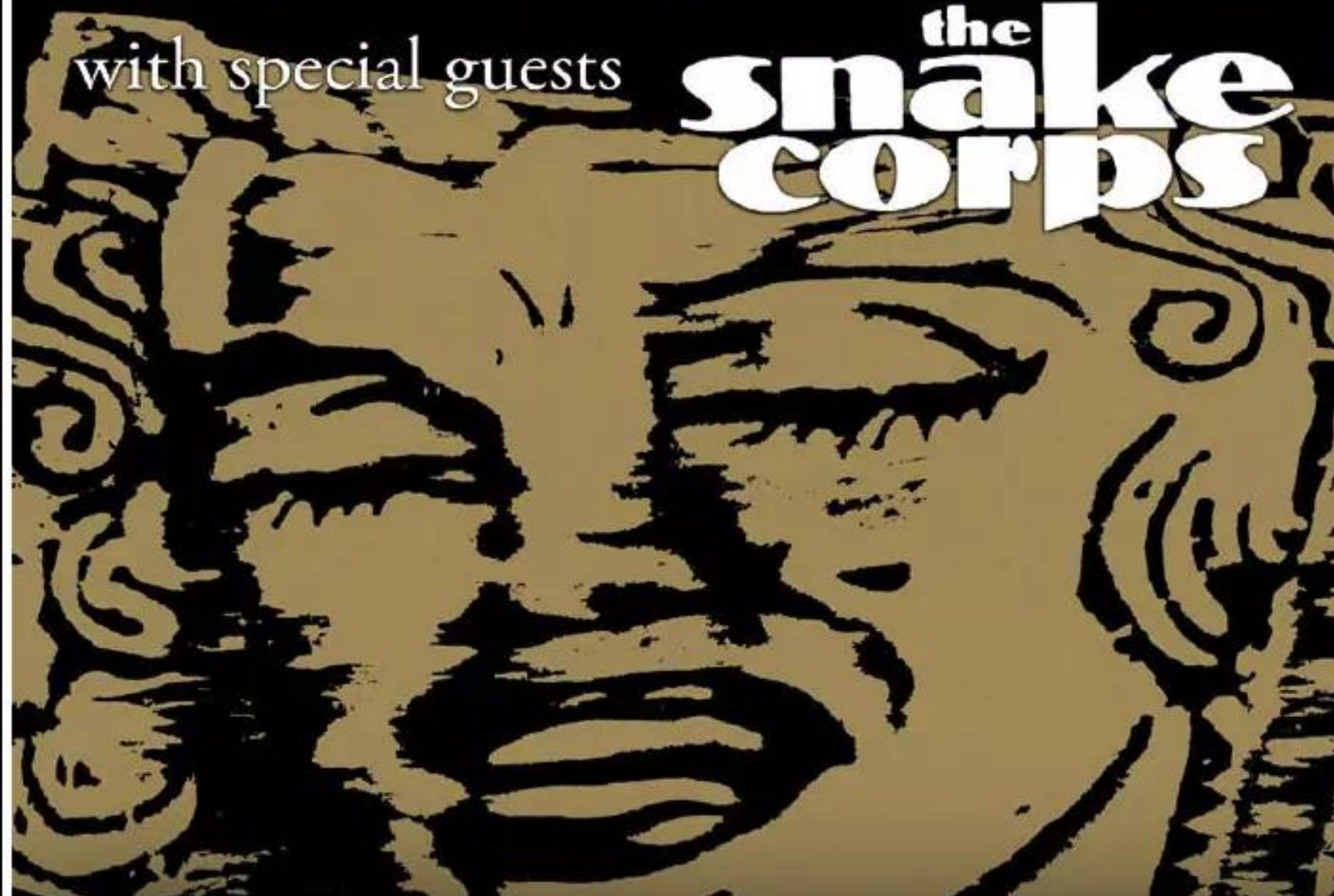
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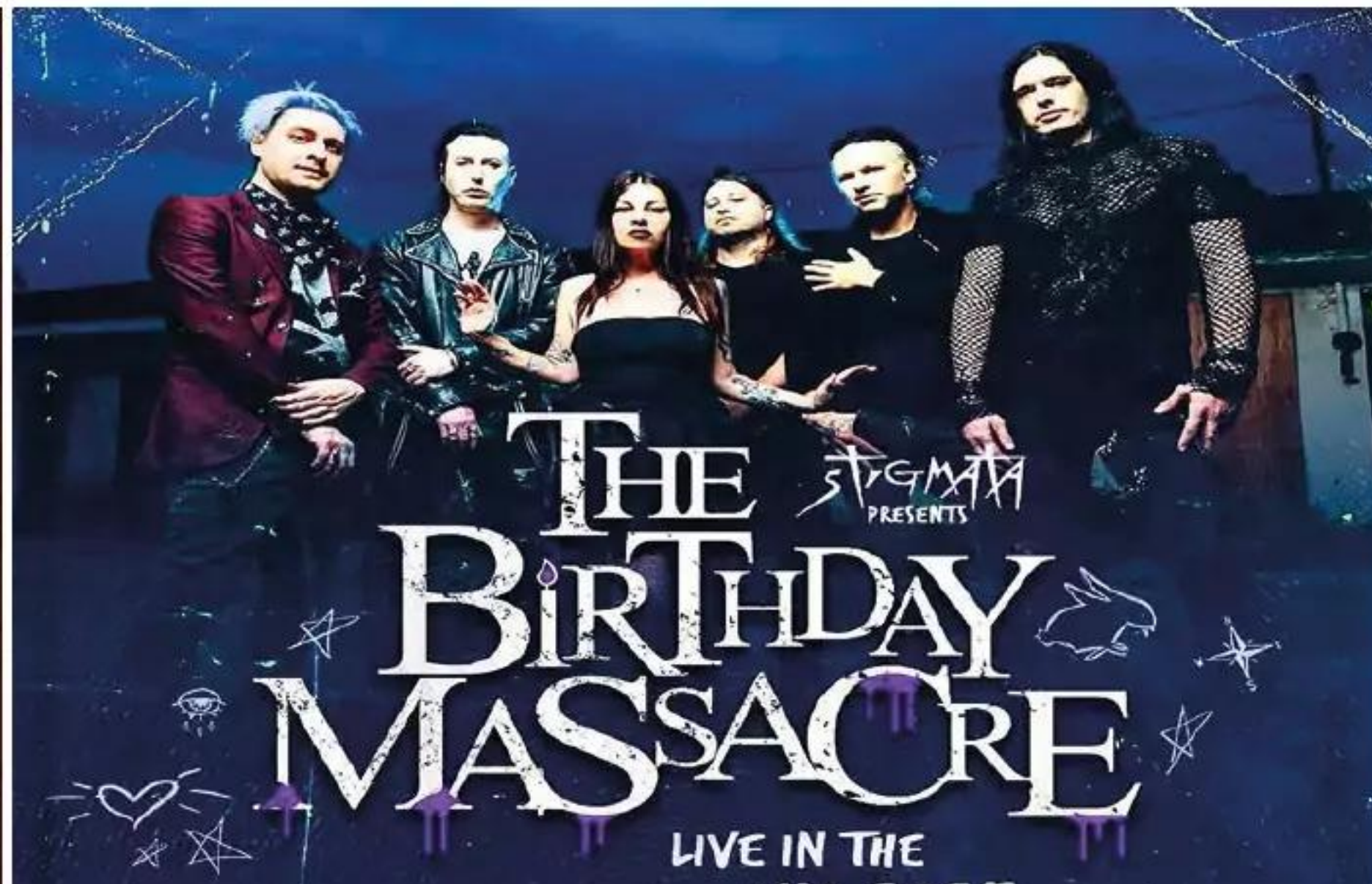
WED 10th SEPT - GLASGOW, IVORY BLACKS
THU 11th SEPT - LONDON, LEXINGTON

PRESENTLY TOURING
THE UNITED KINGDOM
IN THE YEAR 2025



PROFESSOR ELEMENTAL

Wed 24th Sept: NOTTINGHAM ~ The Chapel
Thu 25th Sept: YORK ~ Fulford Arms
Fri 26th Sept: NEWCASTLE ~ Cluny
Sat 27th Sept: GLASGOW ~ Audio
Sun 28th Sept: EDINBURGH ~ Voodoo Rooms
Thu 2nd Oct: CARDIFF ~ Fuel
Fri 3rd Oct: BEDFORD ~ Esquires
Sat 4th Oct: LONDON ~ 229 Club
Sun 5th Oct: MANCHESTER ~ Rebellion

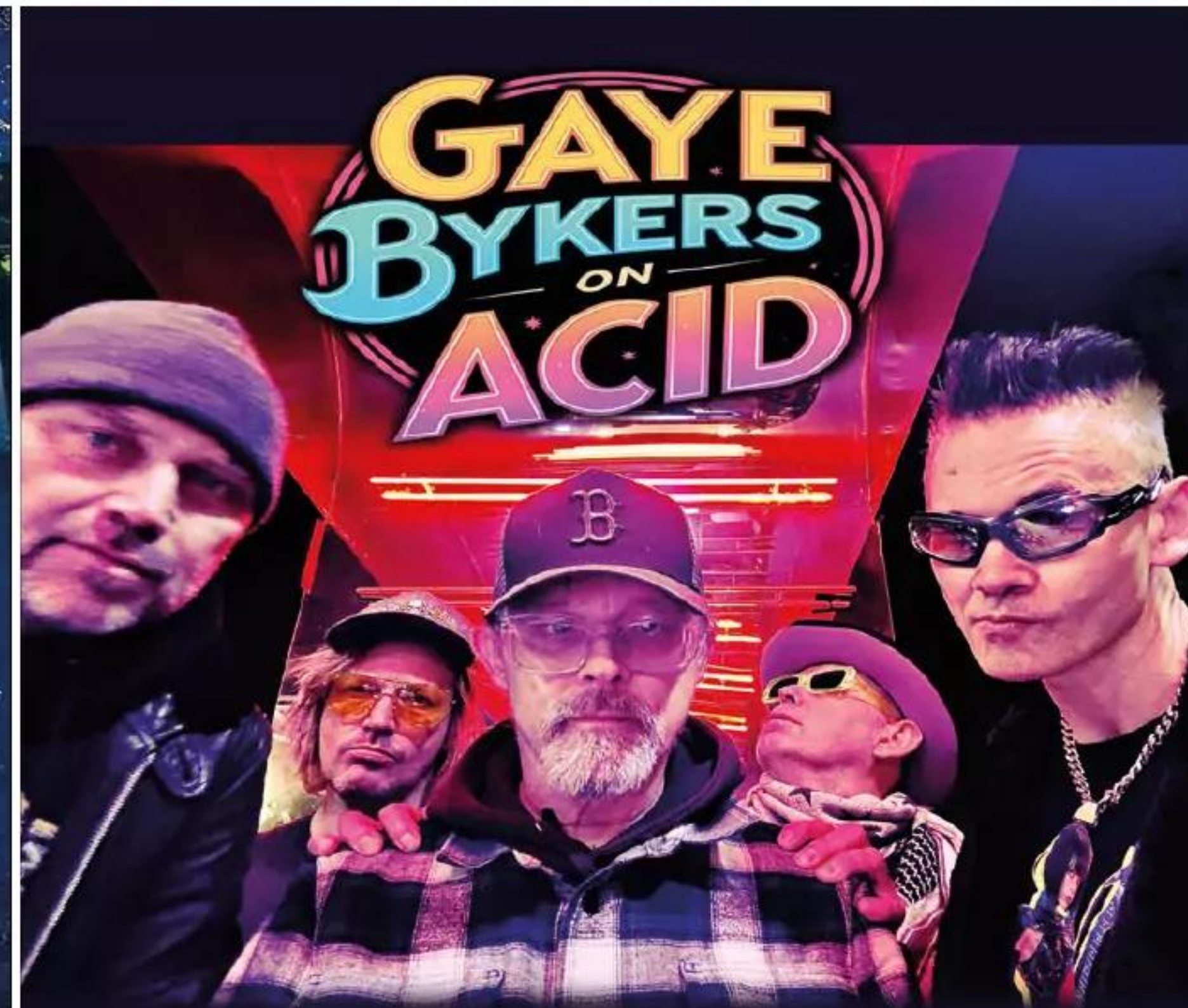


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WITH

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YORK - (CRESCENT 29.10
NEWCASTLE - CLUNY 30.10
SHEFFIELD - CORPORATION 31.10
01.11 MANCHESTER - REBELLION
02.11 NOTTINGHAM - RESCUE ROOMS
04.11 BRISTOL - EXCHANGE
05.11 CARDIFF - FUEL
06.11 WOLVERHAMPTON - NAC
07.11 BEDFORD - ESQUIRES
08.11 - LONDON - GARAGE



GAYE BYKERS ON ACID

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FRI 12TH DEC '25 - SHEFFIELD, CORPORATION
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Credit: Les Chappell



'WRITING ON THE WALL'

LENE LOVICH INTERVIEW

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Lene Lovich was born Lili-Marlene Premilovich in Detroit, Michigan. With her mother and siblings, she moved to England at the age of thirteen to live in Hull. It was a difficult and turbulent period for Lene and family, who fled from the USA in fear of her mentally ill father. In the coming years Lene enrolled at the Central School of Art and Design, where she continued and developed her interest in making music. Blitzed spoke with Lene ahead of her UK tour, and she continued the story...

"I was always interested in music. It was everywhere in the black neighbourhood where I lived as a child in Detroit. There was a store front gospel church where the people sang so loud you could hear it in the street. I used to stand outside and listen, too scared to go in. From the age of about eight, I made up songs to entertain my brother and sisters. "Hairy Monkeys" was the best. Life was hard with my

mentally ill and dangerous father. Running away with my mother, brother and sisters was the best thing we could do. Mum was from Hull, so that's where we went. It was a relief not to be living in fear and people were kind. As I got older it was clear to me that I wasn't the same as everyone else. My instincts told me my thoughts and feelings had to be suppressed. It wasn't healthy to be different."

Along with having to adapt to a new country and culture, Lene soon discovered that her individuality of both style and thinking were very different to the other young people attending art school.

"When I was accepted at Central School of Art in London, I thought it was going to be a wonderful escape. A happy place where I could release all my creative energy. But it was a disappointment. I didn't speak or understand 'art language', I found it hard to justify my ideas. And when I mentioned a liking for surrealism,

they made me feel wrong. As if it was unacceptable to be inspired by your imagination."

So, adjusting to life was an ongoing process, but Lene did connect with some students who were more aligned with her personality and character, and also her love of music.

"It wasn't all bad, I found a few friends. And after a year, Les Chappell, my school friend from Hull, came to Central School of Art too. Almost everyone played the guitar, but not me. I tried, but it just felt awkward. If I couldn't play an instrument, the natural thing to do was sing. I'd been singing inside my head for years, but it was a while before I got used to using a microphone. I don't think I was influenced by any particular sound or style of music. I

I made up songs to entertain my brother and sisters

just liked distinctive voices and interesting songs and sounds. Early Bob Dylan, Roy Orbison, Dusty Springfield, Jimi Hendrix's guitar, Arthur Brown, Frank Zappa and The Doors, dub reggae, The Residents and German electronic music".

Lene and Les Chappell stayed close through the years at art school and beyond, they had bonded through music and the need to find enough money to live on, so turned their attention to busking.

"Les and I began busking, mainly in the subways at Tottenham Court Road tube station. The sound was great, lots of echo and people noise. We liked the idea that it wasn't a captive audience. The police weren't heavy handed. We'd usually just get a caution and be asked to move on. It was an ideal situation, like a live rehearsal. We earned some pocket money and learned a lot about performance. It was fun at first, but after a while the atmosphere changed. Too many people

// Supernature was a huge success

// started busking. Some were aggressive and some not so entertaining. When the transport police started arresting buskers for trespass, we felt it was time to stop.”

Leaving busking behind, the experience proved a good learning ground for honing their craft, and also a catalyst for Lene and Les to move up a gear in the music world.

“Les’s guitar playing had improved with all the busking. And he started to be more interested in electric guitar. I had picked up the saxophone, thanks to the encouragement of Bob Flag. He was an amazing performing artist and entertainer

and a really good sax player. He gave so many of us newcomers (including David Bowie) a chance to perform by inviting us into his crazy fringe theatre world. Les and I decided it was time to be in a band. He was attracted to rhythm, and I liked the horn riffs in American soul recordings. So, we searched the ‘musicians wanted’ section of the Melody Maker until we made a connection with a new band that became The Diversions. We played the London pub rock circuit, which was very popular. Eventually, we were signed by Polydor records and The Diversions were soon in the studio, recording a cover of The Commodores hit, ‘The Bump’. While I was recording the sax parts with more professional players, someone contacted the studio asking if anyone wanted to write disco lyrics for some French guy. I immediately said, yes. no one else was interested. The French guy was Jean-Marc Cerrone. He’d had some success with his first album and was in a hurry to release another. There was no time to check me out. He just believed me when I said I could do it. I had no experience of disco, but I wanted to accept the challenge. It

was a thrill to record with real players, brass and strings, and great session singers in a time before computers. The album was well received, and I became part of the team. As ever, Cerrone was moving at a crazy pace. He sensed it was time to change direction, away from sexy disco. There were no guidelines. I just had to come up with something different asap. This was the moment I’d been waiting for. Now I could write words I really cared about. I wanted to wake up the world. I wanted to say, don’t mess with nature. ‘Supernature’ was a huge success. But once again, I received no credit for writing the lyrics. And no money, only the promise of some royalties at some point. I was finally ready to step away from Cerrone. Maybe it was time to see what Les and I could do.”

“The punk revolution was a great opportunity for anyone to have a go at being on stage and making something happen. It was a unique time, when the major record labels lost control. In the confusion, with help from Charlie Gillett and Gordon Nelki, Les and I were signed to the independent label Stiff Records. Stiff had recently gone through a big change and had lost some of their artists. The new artists they signed were expected to release their albums as soon as possible and all at the same time. In the rush, Les and I were left alone to record our first album, *Stateless*. A big UK tour was organised to promote all five releases - by train! It was a glorious experience, and we couldn’t be ignored. Each band played for about half an hour. I felt no pressure, even though I’d never been a lead vocalist before. I was just determined to do my best. And because Les and I had created most of the songs, we knew what to do.”

Lene and Les had recorded and released the debut album *Stateless* in 1978 with Stiff Records, which reached number 35 in the UK Official Album Chart. The tour by train was a clever idea and newsworthy in itself. The lead single ‘Lucky Number’ reached number 3 in the UK Official Singles Chart. Did the newfound commercial success bring with it aspects Lene wasn’t expecting?

“It was only after the tour was over that I felt the responsibility to have a hit record. Suddenly my life had changed, and I felt overwhelmed and exposed. There were endless interviews and trips abroad



credit: Jai Dee



Credit Luc Luyten

to promote *Stateless* and a lot of attention to the way I looked. I didn't like having to explain myself. People didn't believe I was real. Les and I were very pleased with the next two albums, *Flex* and *No Man's Land*. But Stiff were unhappy with the lack of hit singles. Things got worse when I rejected the idea of recording a cover of a Motown song. Stiff really didn't want *No Man's Land*. But Epic, who released some of Stiff's albums in America, were interested. Reluctantly, Stiff were obliged to release it. And soon after, they dropped us. By this time, Les and I were exhausted with the music business. I was unwell and advised by doctors to stop work. There was no money to keep our band together. We'd never earned much during our time with Stiff. But just when things were looking really bad, some royalties from the French disco songs arrived. We left London and put a deposit on a house. And then two children appeared. I wanted to put my energy into what really mattered, family first. And then what? I got a surprise call from Nina Hagen, my punk superstar activist friend. She wanted us to write and record an animal rights song for PeTA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). She came to our home studio, and we had a fun time making our message about saving animals. 'Don't Kill The Animals'."

We interviewed Thomas Dolby recently and he was saying how grateful he was that Lene allowed him to play keyboards with her when he was just starting to find himself. He really learned a lot from the experience. Thomas wrote a song for Lene after seeing her perform in Italy. How did they get together?

"One of the best parts about being involved in the music business is meeting

good people with great ideas for songs. I met Thomas Dolby when Epic records put us on tour with Bruce Woolley in America. Thomas played keyboards in his band. It was some time after when we needed a keyboard player, that we got in touch. And he wrote me a song – 'New Toy'. Brilliant!"

Over the last four decades Lene has performed so many live concerts around the globe, and always gives a full-on, theatrically infused show, but does she have any particularly special memories?

"It's not possible for me to give less

than 100% on stage. The energy bursts out of me no matter how tired, ill or unhappy I'm feeling off stage. Every performance is important and equal. Some stand out because they happened in unusual circumstances. Like the time Yoko Ono invited me to take part in the celebration of Double Fantasy that she and John Lennon made together. The feeling of love from the audience was overwhelming."

So what does the immediate future hold for Lene Lovich? ... There is a UK tour in May, starting in York, which sounds exciting, can we expect another album any time soon?

"I can't rule out another Lene Lovich album. There's lots of ideas in my head, so it could happen. But for now, I'm excited to be on the road again. I'm lucky to still have a voice. I have an amazing group of musicians that work with me. All of my band are highly creative people. Our differences make us strong. We're totally independent from the music business and we do what we like. Come and see us in action. Get it while you can!" ●

Book your Lene Lovich gig tickets at www.lenelovich.net

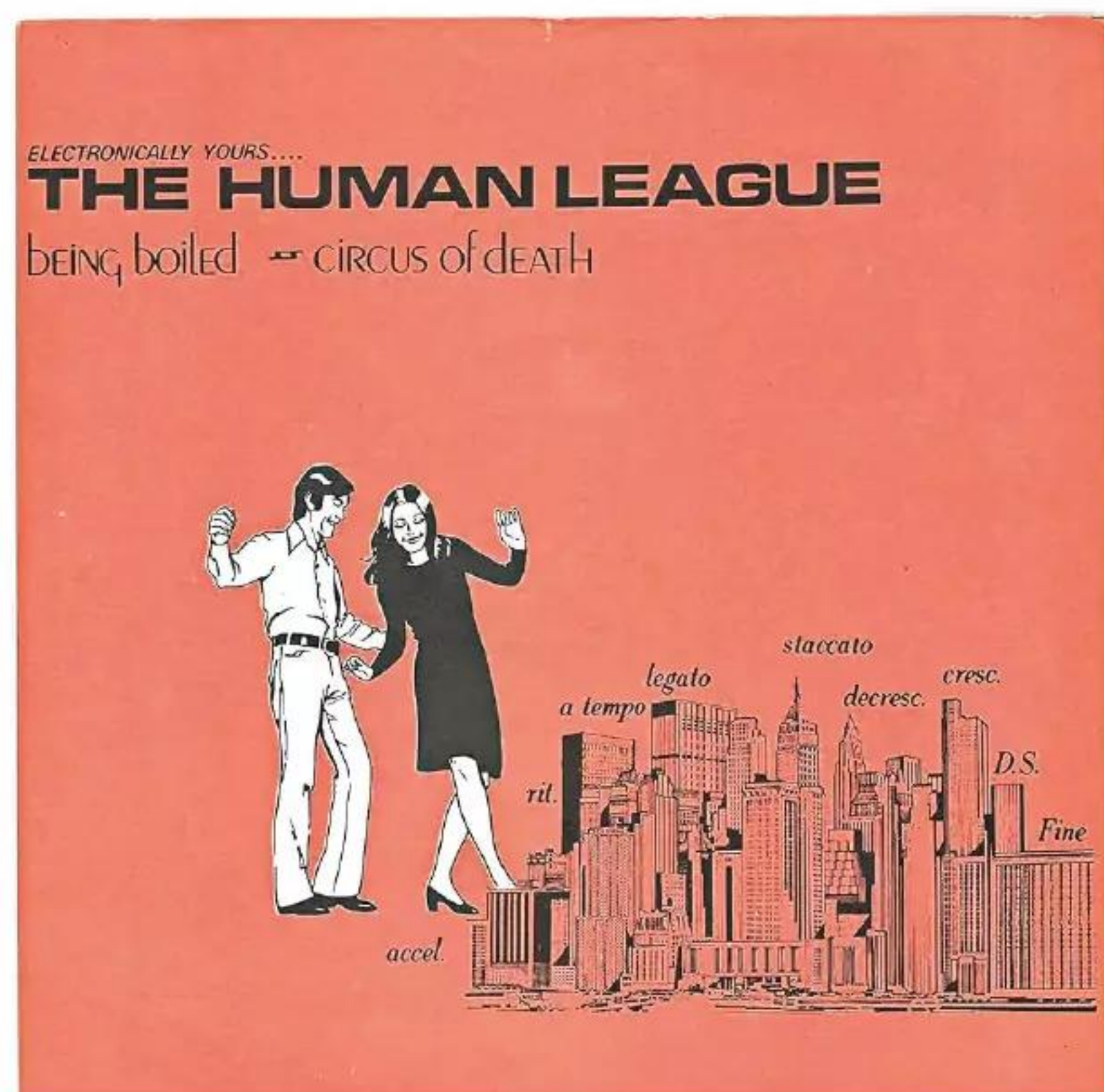


Credit Les Chappell

INSIDE RUSTY EGAN'S BLITZ CLUB PLAYLIST

by Richard Evans

Inspired by Blitzed's ongoing mission to celebrate the best of Blitz culture from Steve Strange and Rusty Egan's legendary club of the same name, Richard Evans - author of Listening to the Music the Machines Make - Inventing Electronic Pop 1978-1983 (Omnibus Press) - brings us the stories behind some of the songs from Egan's soundtrack to those times.



I don't have a favourite song. In fact I'm always slightly suspicious of people who claim to have one, because how can you possibly choose just one track from all the music out there? However I do have a prepared answer to the question, just in case. If I did have a favourite record then it might be The Human League's debut single 'Being Boiled', first released on the Fast Product label in June 1978.

'Being Boiled' is an incredibly strange record. I'm listening to it right now and, by rights, having been out for over 45 years, it should sound old-fashioned. The synth sounds are primitive and rudimentary, and the recording itself is distinctly lo-fi and unsophisticated. And the lyrics, delivered with such pomposity, are wilfully pretentious and obscure. But it doesn't sound old-fashioned. It sounds brilliant and peerless, and I still get goosebumps every time I hear it.

"Trendy Hippies," ran guest reviewer John Lydon's entire two-word review of 'Being Boiled' in the NME upon the single's original 1978 release. "The machines are taking over," muttered Melody Maker in theirs, admitting to not having a clue what the song might be about, but noting, "it mentions Buddha a lot if that's any help?" Talking to The Human League at the time of the release Sounds may have regretted taking the opportunity to ask the band what it was about, after frontman Phil

Oakey explained that it was inspired by the moral irresponsibility of sericulture (the culture of silk-worms, who are dropped in boiling water to remove their skins) and it's connection with Buddhism. Or possibly its connection with Hinduism, Oakey being unsure on that particular point.

Although commercial success eluded the initial release, 'Being Boiled' had a moment in the sun when it reached number six in the UK singles chart in 1982, in the slipstream of The Human League's monumental success with Dare. Since then the track has become firmly established as a cornerstone in the development of electronic music. "Being Boiled' was recorded in a disused factory on a domestic tape recorder for £2.20, the cost of the tape. We didn't have a mixing desk, we didn't have any EQ," the band's Martyn Ware told Electronic Sound later, "Everybody says 'Oh, we love the minimal simplicity'. We couldn't do anything else really."

Minimal simplicity was also the order of the day for another pioneering electronic artist who had released his own groundbreaking debut just a few weeks before 'Being Boiled', but was unaware of The Human League or of the other artists operating in a similar space who were yet to emerge as his peers. "I was doing it in a vacuum," Daniel Miller explained later, "it was all my world in my own head, as far as I was concerned." Miller's debut, released under the name The Normal, was released on his own label, Mute, in April 1978.

Intrigued by punk and attracted to the DIY infrastructure that came with it, Miller was unconvinced by the actual music emerging from the movement, and was instead drawn to the potential offered by the first wave of affordable synthesisers hitting the market. "I thought electronic music was the next logical step," he reasoned, "A synth was no longer an elitist instrument, and that was an

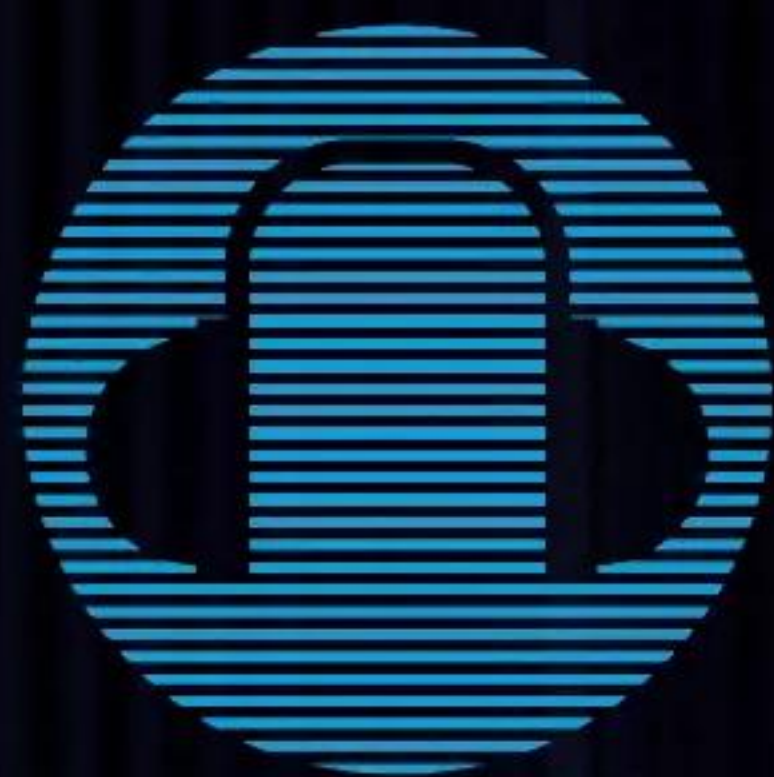
important point. You didn't have to be a musician; if you had good ideas, you could make music out of electronics." And Miller was full of good ideas.

In early 1978, inspired by The Desperate Bicycles's recent demystification of the record release process, Miller formulated an ambition to record and release just one single. That double a-side single - 'T.V.O.D.' and 'Warm Leatherette' - was recorded in his bedroom in a single day, and Miller then set about launching his debut into the world. One test-pressing convinced Rough Trade's Geoff Travis to not only distribute the single, but also to advance Miller the money to increase the record's first pressing to 2000 copies. Another made it into the hands of Sounds' Jane Suck who promptly reviewed the single, proclaiming it her 'Single of the Century', and Daniel Miller's illustrious career in the music business was duly launched.

I don't remember when I first discovered The Normal, it was almost certainly embarrassingly late, but I do remember the immediately disquieting effect those two punk-electro tracks had on me. As with 'Being Boiled' both compositions still hold up today, their lo-fi weirdness making them equally timeless and every bit as influential. "It's cleverly constructed," synthesiser legend Robert Moog told the Los Angeles Times in 1981, "I hate to think on how little that must have cost to put together." ●

„the normal“





ELECTRONIC CAFE

For the lovers of Electronic Music

Hi! We're Andy and Mark, who formed the Electronic Cafe four years ago for two main reasons. The first is to create a platform to showcase all the new artists. Two: Pay homage to the amazing artists who paved the way from that incredible post-punk era. We do this via our Hot Stuff episodes and albums of the year shows. We interview some of the biggest names in the industry. We are both music maniacs, digesting

way more music than most and constantly looking for the best new stuff out there to make your ears happy. Now, we are also bringing live events to audiences at key London venues. Please subscribe to our YouTube channel and become a member of our Facebook community, where thousands of people are simply sharing amazing music- we're also proud to be partners of Blitzed Magazine!



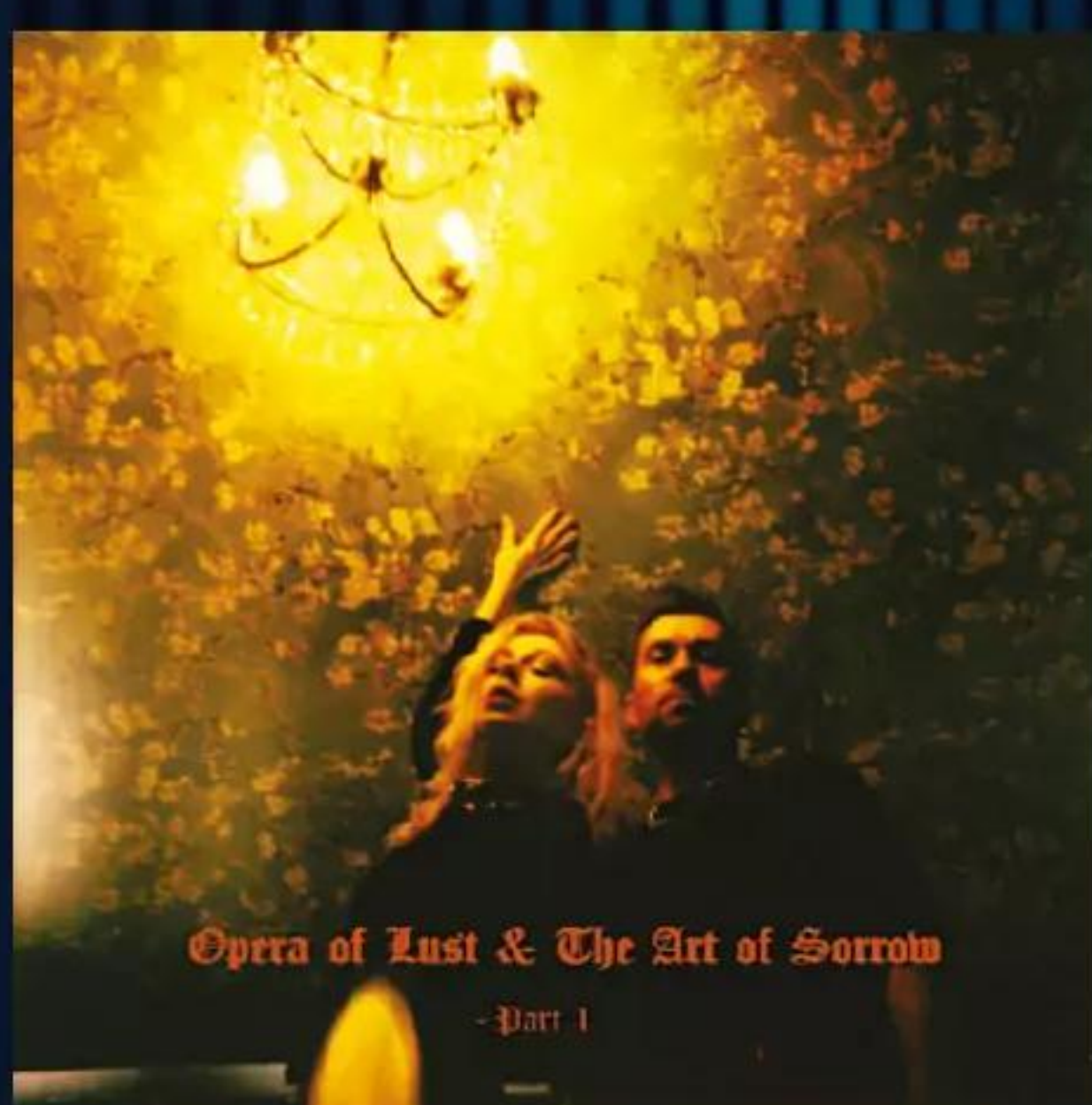
MB3 - TRIPLA

This hotly anticipated release from former Lush front woman Miki Berenyi, Kevin (Moose) McKillop and Aircooled genius Oliver Cherer does NOT disappoint on any level. It's just track after track of well written, sonically stunning music. As record collectors will know, we're always looking for that next gem of an album right? Well ladies and gentlemen, look no further than this. We're already thinking this is a contender for album of the year UNMISSABLE 5/5! And check out our chat with MB3 on the Electronic Café!!



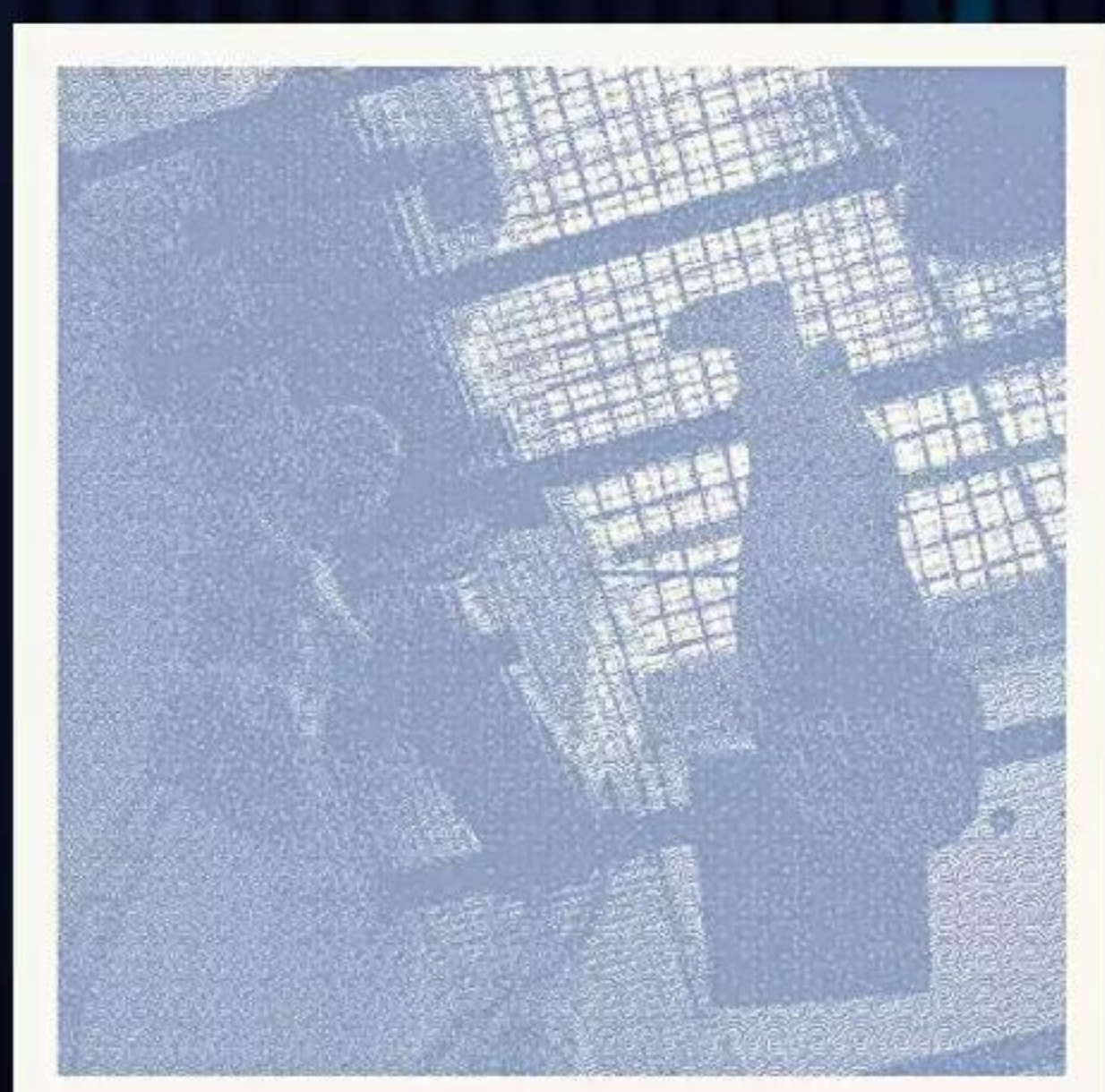
WOLFGANG FLÜR - TIMES

Friends of the EC Wolfgang Flür and Peter Duggal return with another great album in TIMES. This awesome release takes you on a journey where each track seems to open up another chapter of this brilliant journey. With contributions from Emil Schult, Boris Blank, Peter Hook, Juan Atkins and Anthony Rother - this finds Messrs. Flür and Duggal at the top of their game! Look out for tour dates as we know only too well (they played at EC live vol 2 last year) how good they are and also watch our recent interview with them on the EC. If you're a fan of synth pop excellence this needs to be in your collection, it's ESSENTIAL!



NNHMN - OPERA OF LUST AND SORROW PT 1

This Berlin based outfit have been banging out tons of great material over the last few years now, and just when you think they can't do any better they totally do with this EP arriving May 28th. NNHMN take you deep into a world of cinematic soundscapes, hypnotic rhythms, and ethereal vocals. Blending darkwave and gothic electronic elements, it unfolds like a forgotten opera—sensual, melancholic, and beautifully tragic. This is only the beginning. Opera of Lust & The Art of Sorrow is envisioned as a multi-part journey—Part 1 coming soon with more to follow! And we can't wait! BRILLIANT!



BDRMM - MICROTONIC

Microtonic is the third album by Hull based Bdrmm, Opening track features a vocal by EC faves Sydney Minsky-Sargeant of Working Men's Club. There are so many great highlights to be found across this ear tingling album. 'Microtonic', the instrumental title track, is an eclectic mix of styles. Beginning with a synthesiser sound that reminds us of John Carpenter's amazing soundtrack for the film Assault on Precinct 13!. This is a big triumph for the band, this album is AMAZING!



Electronic Cafe



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'PART-TIME REBEL' FRED MANDEL INTERVIEW

By Eoghan Lyng

credit Cara Mandel

Canadian-born session musician Fred Mandel has been playing musical instruments since the age of four. Having been invited to play keys on Alice Cooper's first solo record by a friend, this chance meeting led to Mandel becoming a regular musician in Cooper's band moving from keyboards to lead guitar and eventually musical director. Mandel played on the Pink Floyd album *The Wall*, then performed with Queen on their 'Hot Space Tour', guested on *The Works* album and hit singles 'I Want to Break Free', 'Radio Gaga' and 'Hammer to Fall'. Mandel recorded on a number of charting releases with Elton John including the albums *Ice on Fire*, *Leather Jackets*, *Reg Strikes Back* and *Sleeping with the Past*. Blitzed caught up with the seasoned instrumentalist to discover more about his fascinating career.

"I was working with Alice Cooper for four years," Mandel tells me, "and I was talking to Bob Ezrin one day. He said, 'Can you play B3?' I could play organ but couldn't

really remember how to turn it on. I was asked to play B3 on a Pink Floyd record." Unsure what to expect, Fred Mandel showed up to see Ezrin, Roger Waters and David Gilmour sitting on "a dumpster." "Well, I went in and played on 'The Show Must Go On' and 'In the Flesh'; they were similar chord structures. I hung out with Waters and had lunch with David Gilmour. A quick session but it went on to be a pretty big album."

He's not joking: in many quarters, *The Wall* has become Pink Floyd's most fondly remembered album, showcasing their bravura and intellectual curiosity. As it happens, Mandel wasn't credited on the album ("...it had already been printed..") but was duly recognised on the film version starring Bob Geldof. "So, that was a verification, and Roger and Dave gave me credit at press, which was nice."

You name them, Mandel's probably played with them. "I was onstage with Paul [McCartney] at Live Aid, but he had a problem with his microphone. With

one of the wires being switched, Paul's vocals weren't really audible for half the song. But then they kicked in. I did Live Aid with Elton," Mandel continues, "which Bob Geldof organised, but I never really ran into Bob. It was very hairy that day; a chaotic day. A lot of stuff going onstage. I always had a good time with Elton. When I joined it was with the original band of David, Dee, Nigel and myself. That was a really rocking band, and there's a video of a concert from Wembley; I had done Wembley before Live Aid. I had three hours of rehearsal," Mandel laughs, "Three hours for a forty-four song set is not a lot. I had to learn the rest of the parts on a Casio in my room like Tinkerbell, and had to duplicate it in front of 30,000 people on a real keyboard."

A stint with the band Lighthouse led him to bump into Brian May in a hotel ("We both had long hair,") much as he bumped into Alice Cooper as a "kid". Through this chance meeting, Mandel contributed to *The Works*, an album that not only



I was onstage with Paul McCartney at Live Aid



utilised the synthesiser in a way that was innovative for a 1970s heavy metal band, but it was also the point when the junior songwriters (John Deacon and Roger Taylor) proved to be as vital as the senior ones (Brian May and Freddie Mercury.) “As Freddie said, ‘Queen was on an even footing with ‘Radio Gaga’, as everyone had contributed songs that were on the same level,” Mandel beams. Mandel’s input is evident from the recordings themselves: ‘Radio Gaga’, arguably Queen’s most accomplished number from the 1980s, is steeped in his imprint. “When I did ‘Radio Gaga’, that was a basic form. Roger had the arpeggiated synth part. We started building the track, and after I did it with him, I put on keyboards, piano and a bass part. It felt a little empty, so I put on this bass part and I think John might have used some of it. Then, we went into the other room where Freddie sang. We did a vocoder part, where Freddie sang and I played the keys. It sounded like [robotic voice] ‘radio gaga’ with Freddie saying that.”

Replete with funk leanings, Hot Space was a departure for the rock quartet, but boasts moments of pop ingenuity



a la ‘Back Chat’ and ‘Cool Cat’. “It was certainly controversial,” Mandel agrees. “But they were ahead of the curve with the synthesiser stuff.” Their decision to “change direction” was one fans and critics struggled to keep up with. “A lot of different styles of music from those guys,” Mandel nods. “We’d just re-released the Star Fleet album, which Brian and I did with Eddie Van Halen in 1983,” Mandel points out. “And I did Freddie’s solo album in 1985.” But The Works was the only bona fide Queen album Mandel collaborated on. Mandel can be heard playing the instrumental passage on Deacon masterpiece ‘I Want to Break Free.’ “I think Brian was slightly upset after he heard the song,” Mandel sighs. “We’ve since repaired that. I was only in the studio with John and Mack. I played all the keyboards, and I think there’s an acoustic guitar on there. A rough track, but I put on the keyboards: pulsing strings, and smooth strings. It was mostly on my Jupiter-8, and John asked if I’d do the solo. I didn’t even think about it.”

Mandel enjoyed a friendship with the group, but he was none the wiser about Mercury’s illness during the late 1980. “The only clue I had was Mack and I went to an album release on Long Beach. Only Brian and Roger showed up, which I thought was unusual because normally the whole band showed up.” Mandel noticed how different the vocalist looked in a video: “He’d lost some weight, and I thought, ‘Is everything ok?’ Afterwards, I called John, and he didn’t say anything.” The four members had agreed to a pact between them, which they upheld until Mercury’s death in 1991. “The last time I hung out with Freddie was in 1988, when I was recording an album with Elton called Reg Strikes Back. We were in the centre of London, and I got an invitation from Queen to celebrate Thanksgiving. Ratty [Peter Hince] picked me up and brought me to Roger’s condominium by the Thames.” Having enjoyed his time, Mandel stood up to leave when Freddie said, ‘Stick around a while.’ Mercury played him the album he completed with Montserrat Caballé. “It was a logical step for him,” Mandel smiles. “I did his solo album in 1985, which was a breakaway from Queen.” Mercury died in 1991, and by the end of the decade, Deacon stepped down from the band. “John is kind of a recluse now, and I respect that. He had his day with Queen,

and doesn’t want to be dealing with it. But he is still involved with them on a business end.” It was up to May and Taylor to carry the torch into the 21st century. In Mercury’s absence, the duo toured with stand-in vocalists Paul Rodgers and Adam Lambert. “I was invited by Brian, I guess, to We Will Rock You in Las Vegas, and I did see Paul Rodgers. Paul was very respectful: it was basically Bad Company with Queen.” He hasn’t seen Lambert but empathises with their perspectives as musicians. It’s a catch-22 for them: form a new band, and the duo risk alienating one half, or continue as Queen and annoy hard core veterans. “History will judge it,” Mandel shrugs, “but they are very respectful of Freddie, and I respect my fellow brother’s playing.”

Mandel, meanwhile, is focused on his own music. “I have a solo album called Part-Time Rebel. I played everything except for drums. It’s starting to get traction worldwide, and I put it out in May last year. I haven’t been pushing it too hard, because I’m not going on the road. I did all the stuff at home, and Ryan MacMillan from Matchbox Twenty played drums on it. It has got some good reviews.” ●



credit: Cara Mandel

Mik Scarlet Reviews

To continue my theme of celebrating female fronted acts, a theme that has run through all of my time here at Blitzed, I had to champion some more bands where women kick arse. After seeing them at the Water Rats I have to start this review off with Polly Pik Pocketz.

POLLY PIK POCKETZ *'ANG ON A MINUTE*

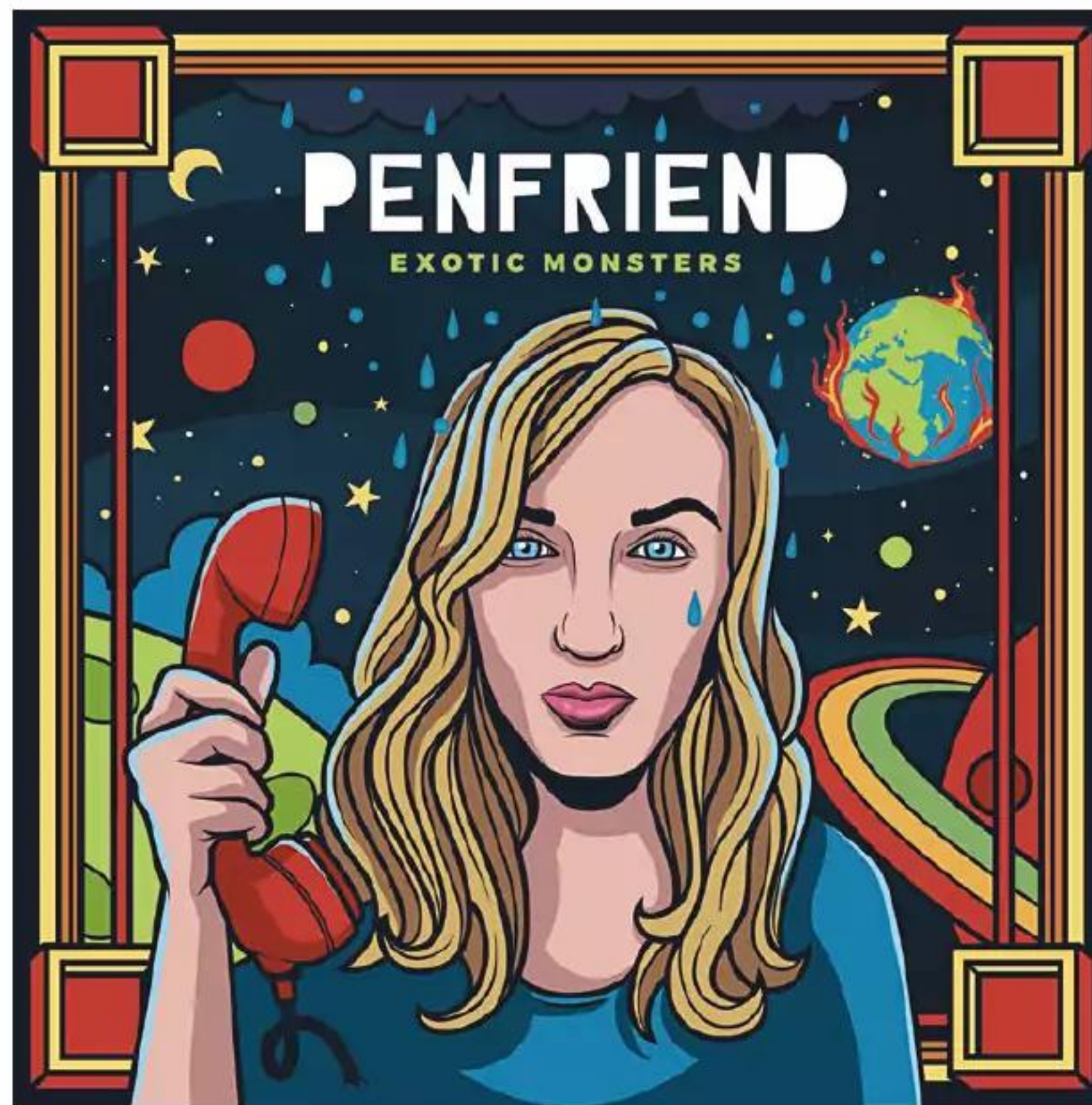


Released a while ago, 'Ang On A Minute' brings you the wonder that is Polly Pik Pocketz in all their power punk pop glory. Before I get you wanting to find out more, I will warn you that they are a band that has almost no online presence. It's almost impossible to find anything about them, or listen to them. They have a Facebook page, and a Soundcloud, which hasn't been touched in 8 years, but that's it. Very punk but awful for sales. So what are you missing and why should you search PPP out? Together Myura, Frog, Matt and Shane create a punk but a new modern take on the genre. Yes, all the punk power chords and hooks are there, but PPP give it a twist that I love. 'Amneezia' is a fantastic track, and 'Bridezilla' highlights the humour of PPP which is something of a change for a genre that can be a bit too worthy at times. I can see big things for Polly Pik Pocketz, especially if they have someone make them findable online.

DUCTAPE *FADE AWAY*

And now for something completely different.... well almost. Ductape hail from Turkey and are goth through and through. Their last latest single 'Blue Black' was a slice of darkwave gorge, with old school jangly guitars thrown in for good measure, but 'Fade Away' goes full throttle goth and is another taking you way back track. Superb, as if the Sisters had Siouxsie singing lead with the occasional syndrum for that disco feel. As it plays you can feel the urge to wave your arms and dance the danse macabre all in black, at the Electric Ballroom or the Slimelight. A time machine of a band but new at the same time.

PENFRIEND *EXOTIC MONSTERS*

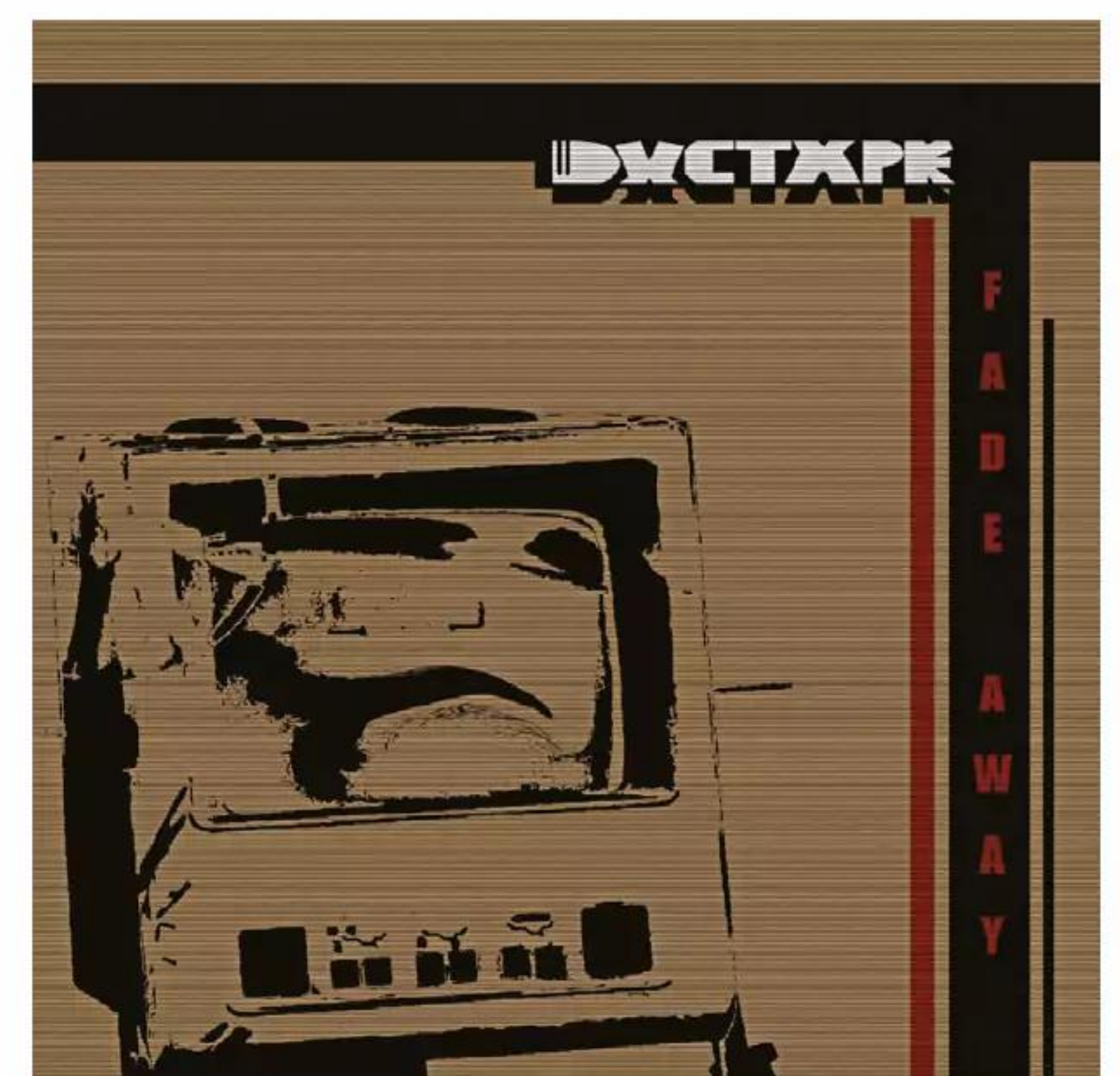


I discovered Penfriend on Facebook, offering a free CD and what a find. Based in Nottingham, Laura Kidd has played in several bands and had given up music. Thankfully she came back with Penfriend, recording all the music and videos in her attic Launchpad, and a new album is due in May. For now I'll regale you with Exotic Monsters released in 2021. To nail down what genre Penfriend is would be foolish. Laura jumps around creating as she feels. Tight production, catchy songwriting and something that makes Penfriend stand out, Exotic Monsters has me excited for the next release, House Of Stories. If you sign up, you will also get The Stories So Far, an EP of how Laura got here. I now have to explore her previous projects, She Makes War and Obey Robots. Exotic Monsters has led me to a download frenzy. Another one. Highlights – 'Exotic Monsters', 'I Used To Know Everything', 'Loving Echoes' and 'Black Car'. Not long until House Of Stories folks.

BONA RAYS *NO CONNECTION*



Bona Rays were an original punk act that nearly made it. Giving up and moving on they returned with their single 'Poser' that was discovered by a new generation. 'No Connection' is their new single, with a real dirty old school feel. Chas's vocals are pure punk perfection and 'No Connection' has all the punky nature that takes you right back to pogoing and gobbing, trying to look cool before your dad comes to get you from the local punk gig. Bona Rays are part of the punk revival that's happening in London and having seen them live I know why. Seeing the "kidz" loving them and finding the real punk spirit touching them now was a joy to experience. If you like true punk, old punk, real punk, the Bona Rays' 'No Connection' is for you.



VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE HONEY LINGERS [REISSUE]

London Records

I have to admit that the Voice of The Beehive passed me by the first time. I think I saw them at a festival somewhere, maybe Reading, but they didn't exactly fit the birth of grunge. So I'm coming to this review as if it was a new release, and I guess that's exciting. So, with this double CD and limited-edition pink vinyl reissue some 34 years later, I wonder, will time have been kind to the Beehive?

As 'Monsters and Angels' kicks off the double CD album reissue, I vaguely remember the track. Which kind of annoys me as I like it! Why didn't it hit home the first time, back in 1991? Maybe I was too cool, into industrial and just discovering the rave scene? But I'm already happy that good old London Records have re-released Honey Lingers. I feel it might be on my CD player for a while to come. 'I Think I Love You' (The Partridge Family/David Cassidy classic) mixes the cleverness of the Kinks with a popstastic take of Motown. It's a real trip down memory lane with the production techniques. The great mix of guitars, live drums with synths and samples, and the clarity of newly developed digital recordings are as clear as crystal and pretty sharp.

The first CD album is the full original album with additional tracks and versions, creating a rollercoaster of styles and mood. One minute you're flying high, the next floating on a cloud, then punching the sky rocking out. There's a huge dose of the B-52s here, but that's no bad thing. 'Just Like You' is a total tribute, but it kicks. I will say that with this being a new CD with lots of extra tracks, CD1 is a little overwhelming and a lot to take in, but

as it contains over a dozen extra tracks compared with the original LP you kind of expect that. The vinyl ends with 'Perfect Place', the third single off the album way back when. A more mellow groovifest of 60s influences, it does make a perfect end to the album. Of course, I'm playing the CD tracklist so there's a lot more to come. It's now single versions, B-sides and some acoustic versions, plus a version of 'Gimme Shelter' with Jimmy Somerville. 'Shine Away' is great, the single versions

music fan. Great end to CD1.

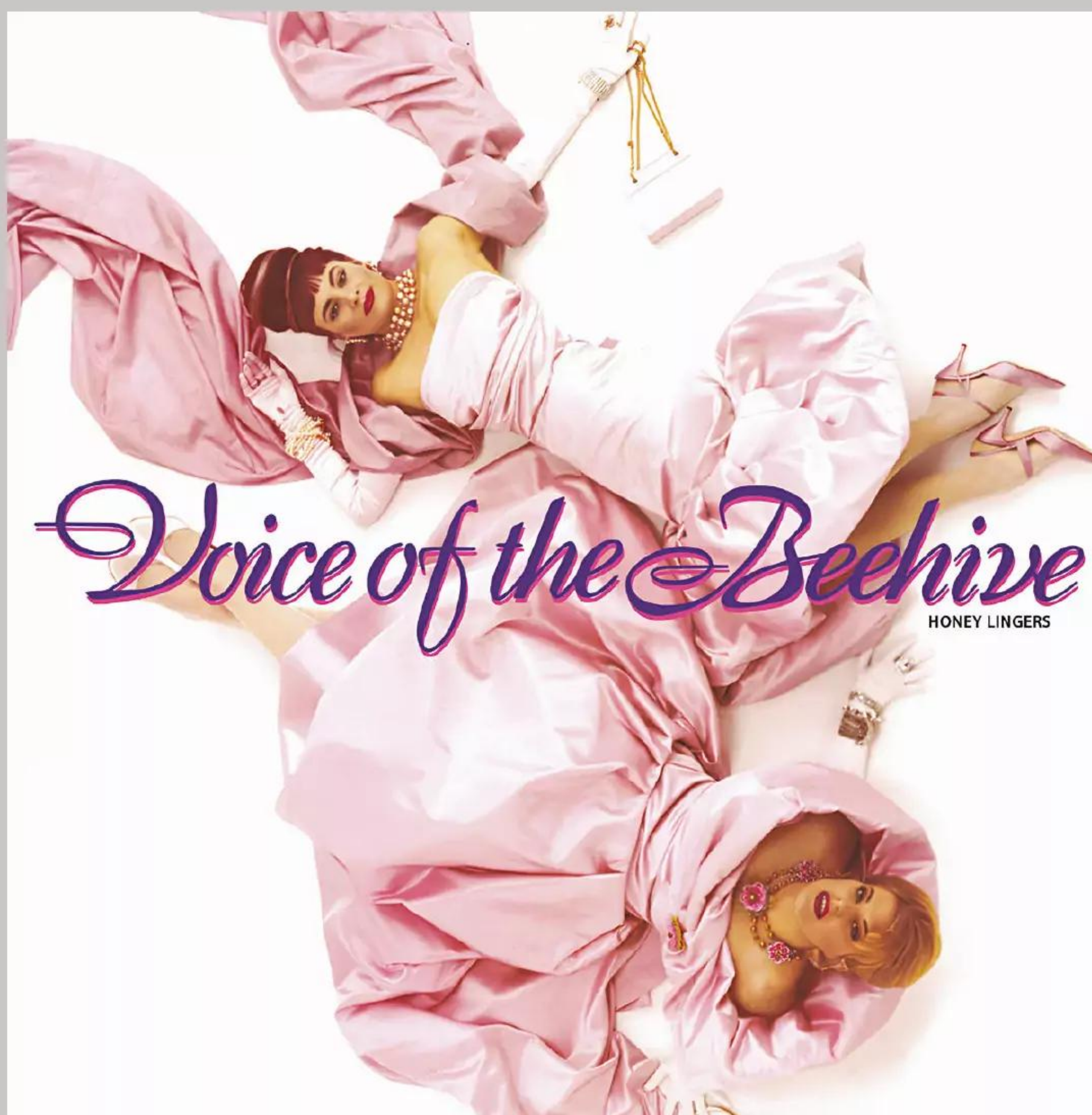
Now CD2 is a release for the fan. Lots of the same tracks in various guises, from demos and original mixes to remixes and 12" versions before six live tracks. 'I Think I Love You' is really interesting, much sparser and trippier. Might have been perfect for the summer of 91 actually. There's the obligatory Phil Harding mix, so 90s, of 'Just Like You'. The Spector Christmas version of 'Little Gods' is really charming and does have a very Xmassy feel. Note to the producer: The Piano version of 'Perfect Place' could have done with a real grand piano. The next three tracks are 12" mixes and you forget how traditionally hit and miss these could be back then, before everyone went for the mix that could be played at raves. 'Perfect Place' is turned into a real peace-out moment by Pat Collier. Cool Daddio. The live tracks really highlight what a tight band Voice of The Beehive were in the flesh. I kind of wish I'd paid more notice sitting out in the sun at whatever place it was I saw them. If you can remember the 90s you just weren't there. As if to prove this, CD2 ends with a cover of 'Sit Down' by James.

Suddenly I'm back at the

Camden Palace on the student night, all sat on the floor getting groovy.

All in all a great release and one I will be happy to purchase (I know, BUY?). If you loved the Voice of The Beehive back then, this is a must. If you didn't, now is the time to fall and get on the 90s train. Typical eh? Just as our wonderful 80s magazine hits new highs, are we about to see a 90s revival? If so I'm up for it man. ●

Mik Scarlet



of 'I Think I Love You' and 'Perfect Place' take the tight production to a new level and 'Gimme Shelter' soars as a dancefloor classic. Was this a single? Should have been, it's fantastic with Jimmy showing off his vocal range big time. The CD ends on three acoustic versions of 'Say It', 'I'm Shooting Cupid' and 'Perfect Place', with 'Perfect Place' really standing out, showing how these tracks were created. I love this kind of insight, as a songwriter and a

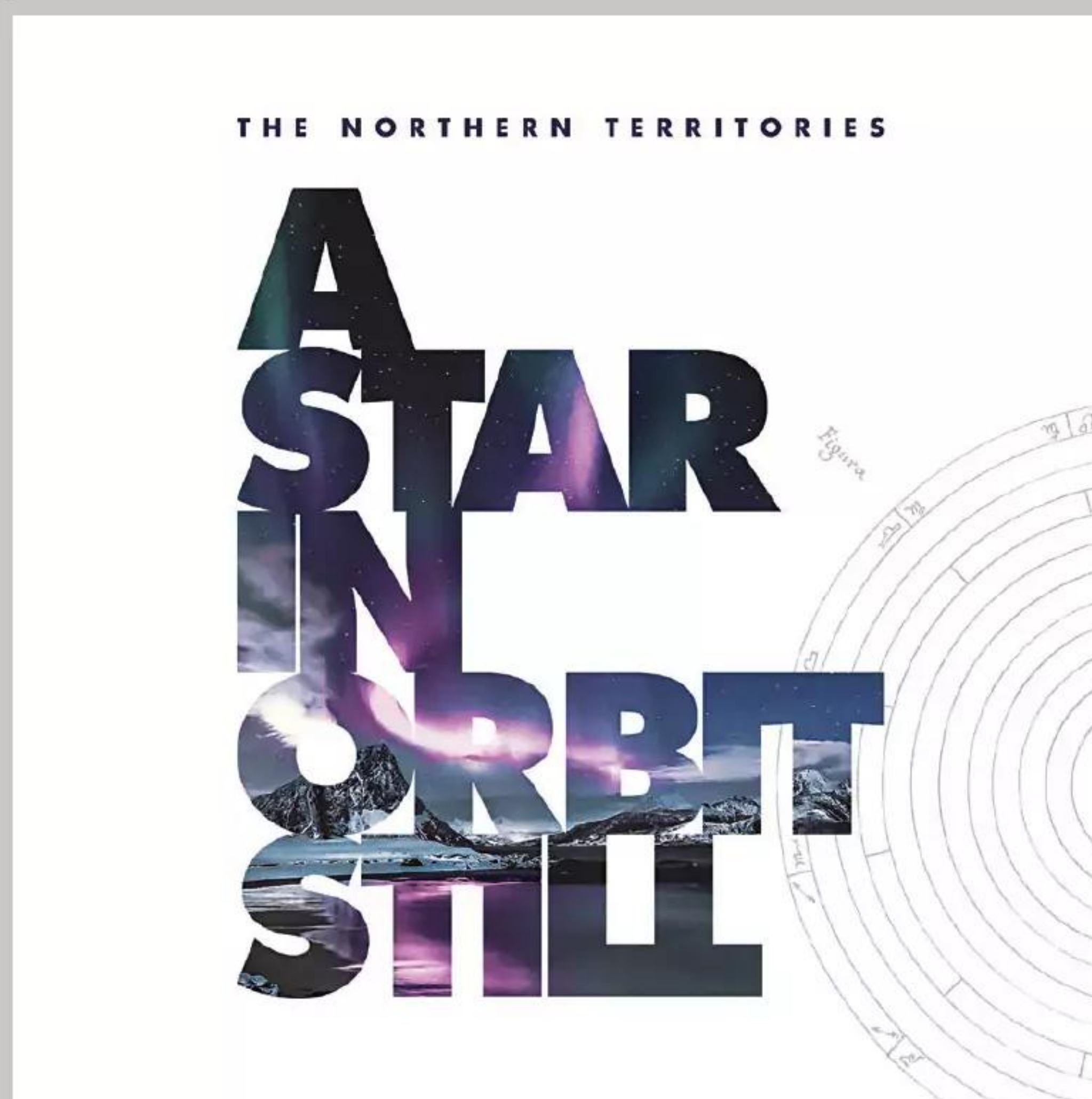
THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES A STAR IN ORBIT STILL

Dependent

Another new band to me, which from the press release that accompanies *A Star in Orbit Still* you could forgive me for as The Northern Territories have returned from a 25-year hiatus from music. Hailing from the home of amazing complex music, Sweden, singers and electronics wizards John Alexander Ericson and Stefan Sääf have returned with something wonderful, something new, different and bedazzling. The album sounds as if it was written while standing out in a Swedish landscape of ice, snow and pine forests, with a wolf howling in the distance, like a location for the grand finale *The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo* or the like. It does have the feel of a soundtrack from a Nordic Noir series, and yet this is harder, more menacing, more heartfelt. TNT aren't trying to be something different; they just are different. Synth based, yes, but something more. No exact influence, more the mixture of fantastic song writing and a desire to blur influences so much they become more impossible to be able to nail down.

A Star in Orbit Still opens with 'In Our Darkest Hour', a sparse cry in the wild. It builds and drops like waves on a shore, with moments of the waves crashing into the sand. It's a little manic but reserved at the same time. 'Dreaming of a Tomorrowland' has the same element of restrained explosion, but that makes the choruses even more tense and uplifting, with the synth hook letting you soar like an eagle against a winter sky. The build is breathtaking, a melancholy joy. 'Love Doesn't Live Here Anymore' highlights that TNT really explore their sound sources and aim to create something that can only be theirs. There are touches of Peter Gabriel, yes that's it. Like 'So' had been recorded yesterday with everything that has happened and is still happening shaping the outcome. It is a masterpiece. 'Love Doesn't Live Here Anymore' is beautiful, honestly just beautiful. I don't

want it to end but as all good things, it must. 'Is This Really All We Are Looking For?' is another stunner, more space in the music, big strings and soul-searching vocals slowly build into something that just feels like dawn over the sea on a calm day. Bloody heck, these guys are geniuses. Talk about a track that builds and grows in stature. It nearly makes you fall over as it ends. As 'The Hunter and the Hunted' begins, I am almost scared to find out



what's next. Hmm, something a little more conventional, well as conventional as The Northern Territories can manage... a real pop track, but with that TNT-something that makes it unlike anything else really. It's amazing to think I'm only halfway through this album. I honestly might have to take a break from the beauty of it all. I'm honestly welling up with tears.

Break taken and back ready for more gorgeousness, the next track is 'Arizona'. Harmonies, angelic in nature sweep me straight back into the emotional rollercoaster before a synth bass takes me and throws me into rapture. This has a slight Depeche feel, but again TNT make it new, strange and wonderful. I've noticed that as well as sounds and stunning vocals these guys play with timescales making you feel off kilter and weird, adding to the feeling that this is unlike anything you

have heard yet you're so glad you have. 'Uppland' is an instrumental, the perfect theme to a grandiose sci-fi film about a new world and a forgotten of yesterday. The Northern Territories use a lot of samples that are wonderfully treated in a way that has the feel of a band pushing old tech to its limits, but that sounds so new. With 'Uppland' you can hear the skill of the soundscapes, using sequencing and looping in a way I've not heard before.

'Highway Winterstar' has a more conventional song structure, with huge synths and arpeggs mixed with looped drums and those signature strings, but it's an obvious single. Like the rest of the album but slightly more instant. Six minutes of bliss. 'Say Yes To Heaven' brings more wonder. The synths in the middle take me to what a heavenly rave would sound like, uplifting yet reserved before fading into dust. 'Waiting For the World to Turn' has an old piano reverbed to death with more lush harmonies, acoustic guitar and sampled voices, a new direction so close to the end? No, it gets bigger suddenly and I'm back standing on the mountain cliff edge

looking at the beauty of it all stretching before me. 'How Mercy Feels Tonight' is the final track, and honestly this review has really taken it out of me. I rarely find such music that hits home so totally, so emotionally. It's a perfect way to end, with that Gabriel-esque feel lifting you up and sweeping you off into the wide blue yonder.

Phew, *A Star in Orbit Still* is going to take some beating. It's an album that is intelligent, thought provoking, truly beautiful and unlike anything really. Proof that despite electronic music reaching its dotage it can produce something new, something wonderful.

Out on Dependent Records in May, this is a must buy. I can't think of any more words. It's breathtaking and wonderful. Just wow. ●

Mik Scarlet

"THE DESOLATION AND FEELING OF BEING
DISCONNECTED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD."

THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES A STAR IN ORBIT STILL



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BRUTALIST ARCHITECTURE IN THE SUN DRIVE BY SUICIDE

The brilliantly named Brutalist Architecture in the Sun have been around a while now but the thrilling electro adrenaline ride that is 'Drive by Suicide' seems powered by the energy of a band making their debut. Taking the stripped-down synth-punk energy of a classic touchstone like The Normal's 'Warm Leatherette', the duo of Dean Clarke and Cyé Thomas successfully evoke the eerie menace of neon lit darkness in a strange town within any urban sprawl around the world. Lyrically minimal, the relentless beats could easily fill the dancefloor of any self-respecting alternative club night, equally Clarke's carefully textured synths lend the track a listenability beyond that purpose.



Virtual 'B-side' 'Burned Out' acts as a coda to 'Drive By Suicide', still inhabiting the darkness but shifting down a level and existing within a similar zone to John Foxx's Metamatic era. While not necessarily breaking new ground (is that even possible now?) both tracks are hard to resist. Available from www.brutalistarchitectureinthesun.bandcamp.com/album/drive-by-suicide-single ● **Simon Heavisides**

LITTLE FINGER BEAUTIFUL DAY

AbNormal

Little Finger is the project of singer, songwriter and musician David Brooks, once of D:Ream, Cutting Crew and Gary Numan's touring band. This track, 'Beautiful Day', originally appeared on his 2021 studio album Big Finish as a bright, rhythm-driven song featuring contemplative, mournful lyrics ("it's a beautiful day / but it feels like it's raining") but rousing instrumental segments that are bound to lift your spirits. Now, courtesy of Bridget Gray and Johnny Normal (aka synthpop duo The Rude Awakening), the song has received an injection of the pair's "unashamedly retro electronic DNA", transforming it into a big, heartstring-tugging

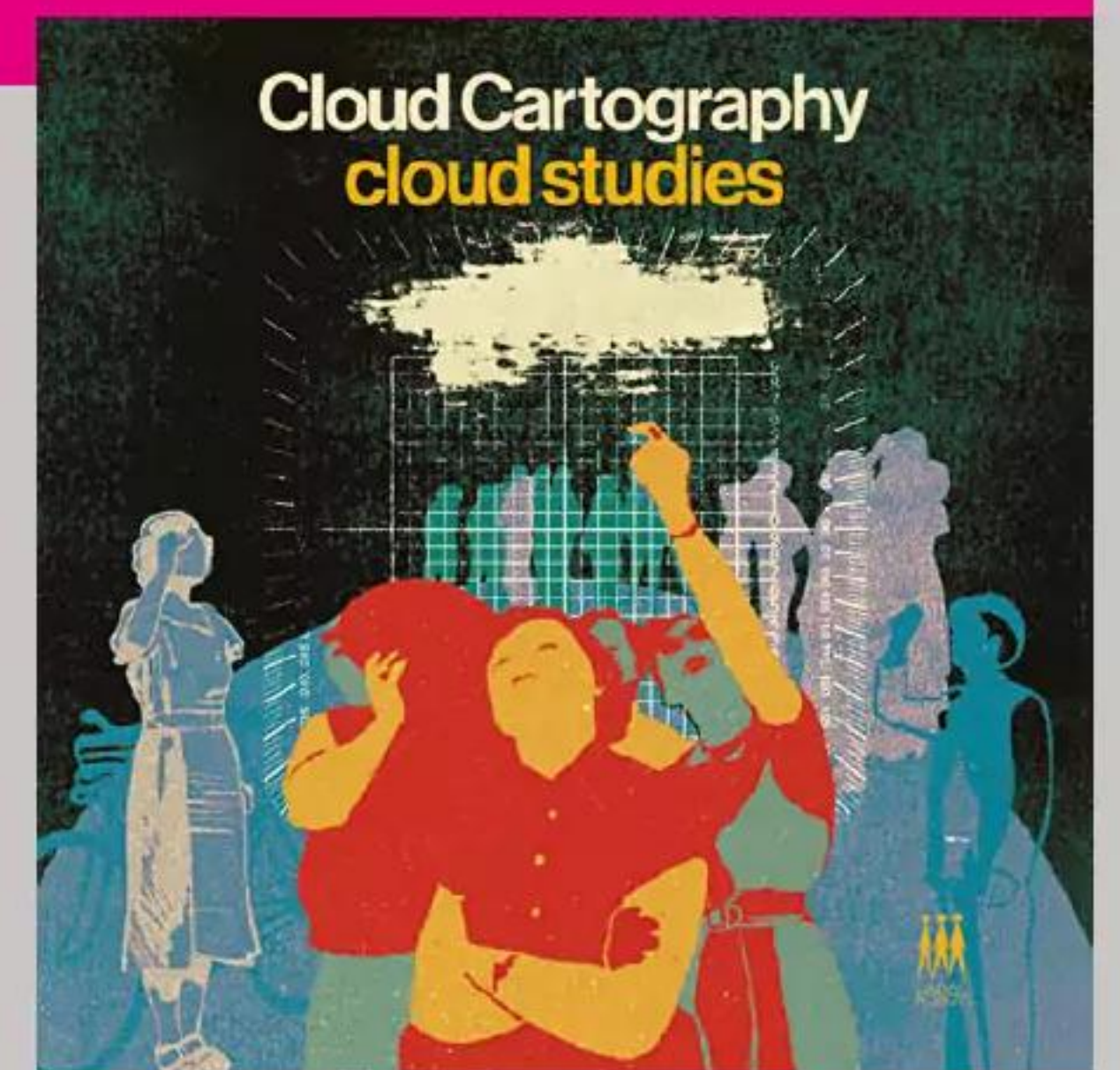


synth ballad that grows on you with every listen. Still retaining the rhythm-centric feel of the original, the remix adds a more prominent bassline, luscious layers of synthesiser and ethereal female backing vocals. All serve to bolster rather than overshadow the sound of the Little Finger version - what any good remix arguably should do - and thereby enhance the emotion that the original wears so blatantly on its sleeve. ● **Imogen Bebb**

CLOUD STUDIES CLOUD CARTOGRAPHY

Happy Robots/ Cargo Records

Cloud Studies were formed in 2024 by Adam Cresswell and Martin J Langthorne seemingly as an excuse to put to use their vast collection of acquired effects pedals. It was in fact this very song, written by Adam, that was the first composition and blueprint for Cloud Studies songs to come. Inspired by the rain-drenched mountainous landscape of Donegal, the track lyrically explores and questions an ever-changing world and our vague attempts to understand it. This is three and a half minutes where your ears are comforted by a dream-like, ethereal blanket of evolving, sprawling synth layers, reverb-infused guitars of Adrian Taylor and Martin J Langthorne, and the pleasantly haunting vocals and assertive bass from Adam Cresswell, held together by the

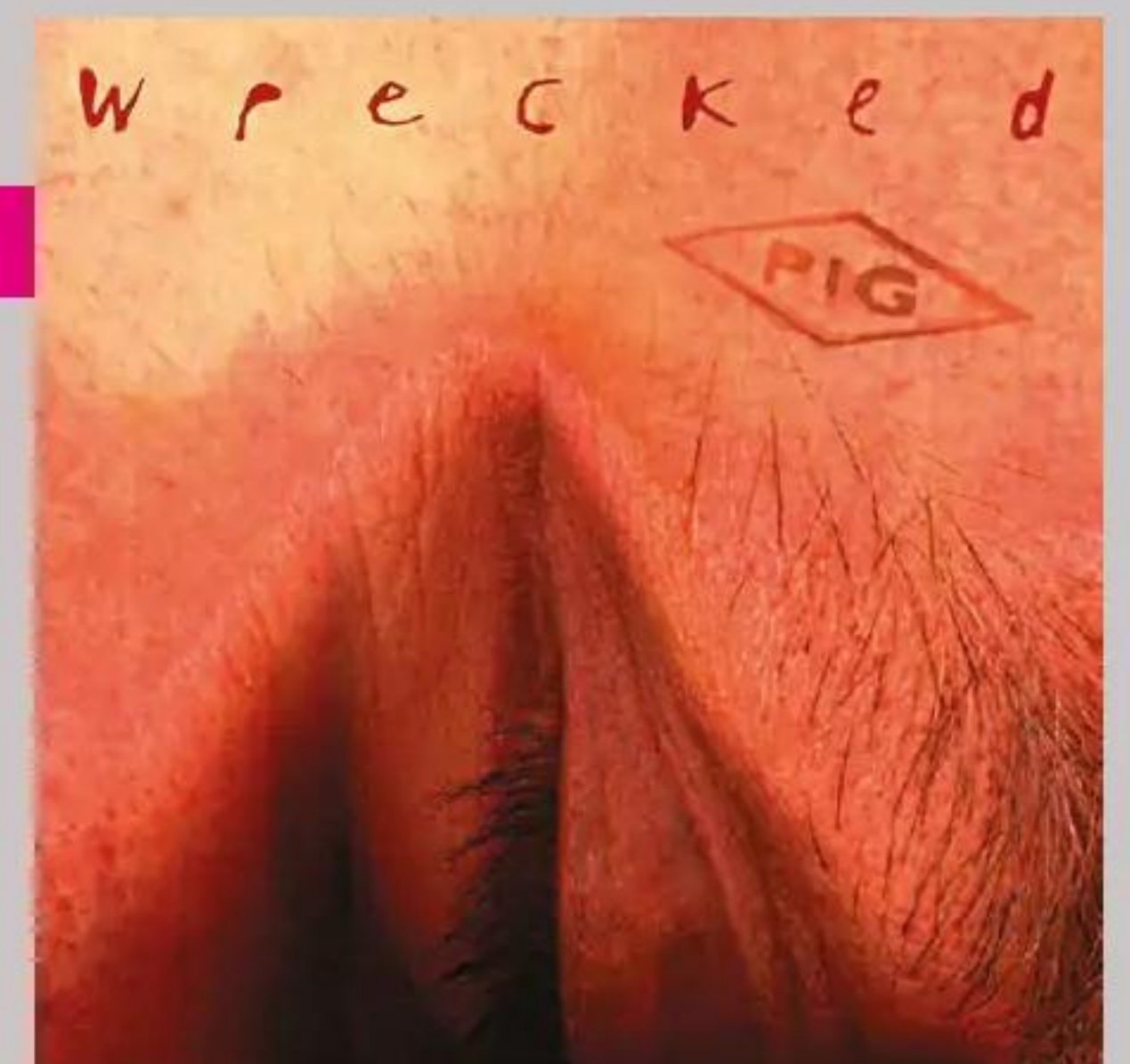


unrelenting rhythmic thread provided by Nat Guest. Yes, there are nods to Film School, Stereolab, Inspiral Carpets in places, but that only adds to the fascinating mix of lush textures, uniting the dichotomic imagery of otherworldly unease and an underlying welcomed optimism from Adam's voice. I didn't think I would resonate with this one, and yet delighted they proved me wrong. Isn't it nice when that happens? ● **Kurt Sinclair-Hall**

PIG WRECKED

Metropolis Records

HPIG (aka industrial music pioneer Raymond Watts) first released Wrecked in Japan in 1996; it went on to be released in the US the following year with a different track listing. This new reissue showcases the original run of songs in all their powerful, violent glory, plus the two songs that originally only appeared on the US edition. None of it is for the faint-hearted - that should be made clear right away. Songs like 'The Book of Tequila' and 'F*ck Me I'm Sick' are unrelenting in their brutality, all jagged guitars and Watts' raw, guttural growl. The thing with Watts, though, is that he knows how to balance the overtly violent with shades of light and dark, and with subtle



but menacing melodies and electronics. 'No One Gets Out Of Her Alive' is a perfect example, blending half-crazed string samples with roars of guitar and a refrain ("a friend of the devil is a friend of mine") that won't leave your head for days. It's on this basis that Wrecked is possibly Watts' finest hour - an album for those who like their industrial music pitch-black, with a healthy dose of artistic flair and finesse. ● **Imogen Bebb**

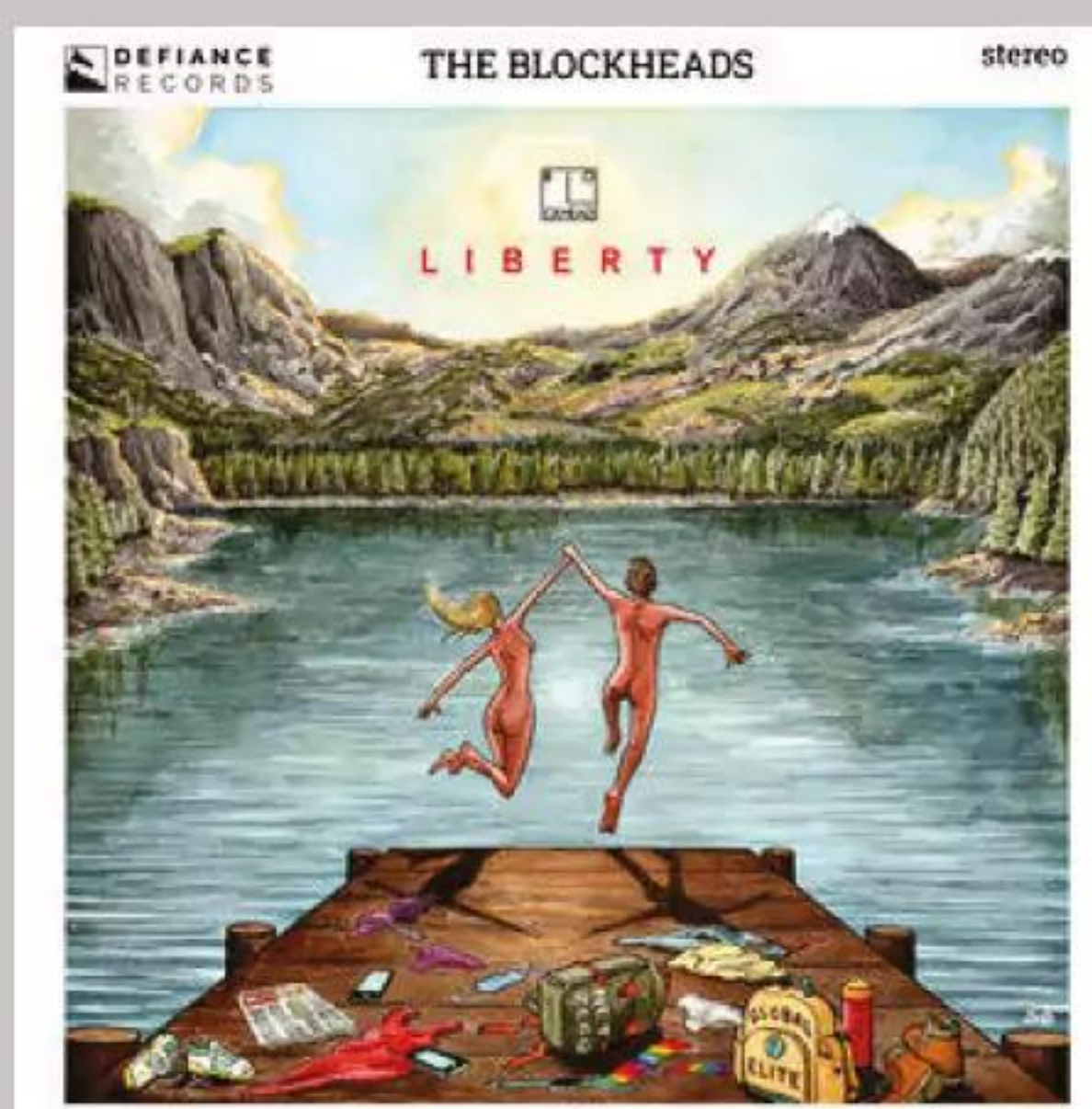
THE BLOCKHEADS LIBERTY

Defiance Records

I just happened to be doom-scrolling through my Facebook feed on Valentine's Day, when I came across a post on The Blockheads page, which announced the release of a new single on Defiance Recordings called 'Liberty'. Pleasantly surprised by this I just had to follow the link and check it out for myself.

Penned by founding members Chaz Jankel and Mickey Gallagher, 'Liberty' is a slice of classic Blockheads and is a barbed commentary on the goings-on in the USA at the moment. There's also a very well edited video on YouTube, which was filmed at Chinnerys in Southend.

As with many Blockheads songs in the past, there are a LOT of lyrics and "new" frontman Mike Bennett (who



will have been in the band for three years come the summer) delivers them with aplomb. As you'd expect, the level of sheer musicianship from Mickey, Chaz, John Turnbull, Dave Lewis, Nathan King and John Roberts is absolutely top notch.

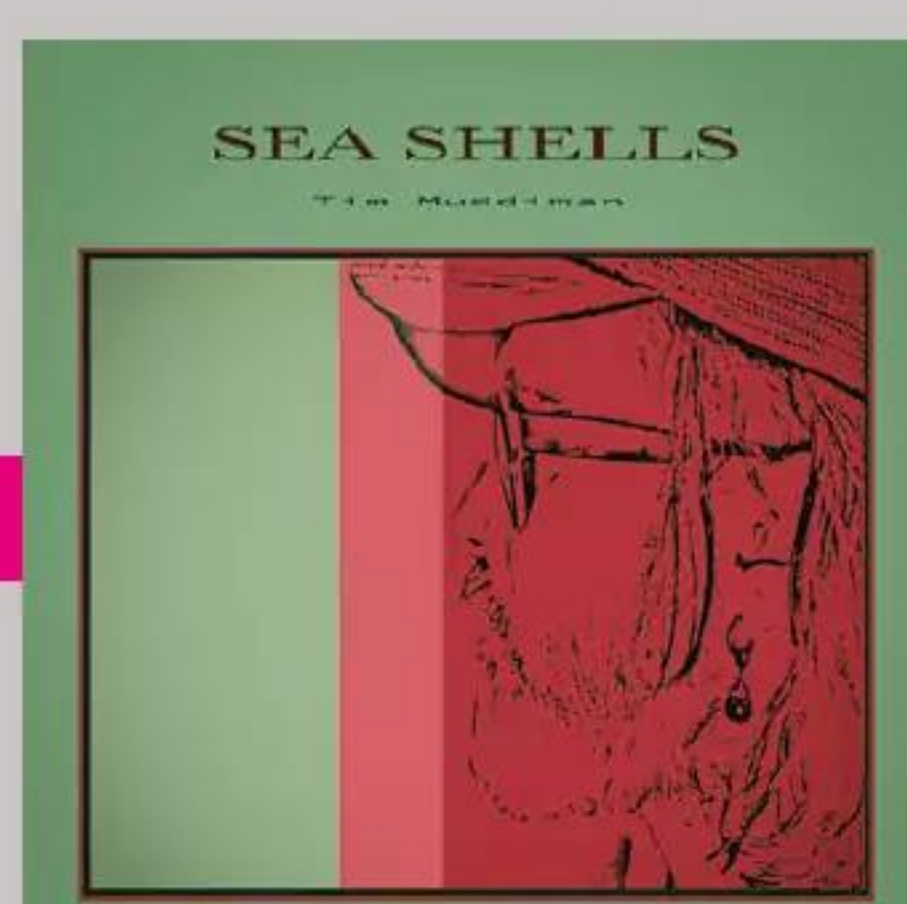
'Liberty' is available on all major digital platforms via distrokid.com/hyperfollow/theblockheads/liberty ●

Gary Watts

TIM MUDDIMAN SEA SHELLS

CIA RECORDS

British artist and musician Tim Muddiman has released the impressive guitar-driven 'Sea Shells' on the U.S. label CIA Records. The casual-groove-laden track "serves as both an ode to the planet and a provocative commentary on the environmental issues that demand urgent action". Whilst lyrically there is no escaping the stern warning of the undeniable effects of global warming, and mankind's neglect and irresponsible destruction of our planet, the message is shrouded in satire, and doused in Muddiman's signature blues and jazz guitar riffs. A cool-as-they-come rhythmic dub bassline, courtesy of Nick Mailing



(Choirboys and Peccadilloes), runs through the core of this clever genre-blurring song. Musically this is quite a deviation from his celebrated and respected music career alongside Gary Numan and also Pop Will Eat Itself. In fact 'Sea Shells' would not be out of place underpinning the opening credits of Peaky Blinders. The song is cool, incredibly cool, and vocally this is Muddiman at his raw, passionate best. This is indeed a sweet sugar-coated pill. ●

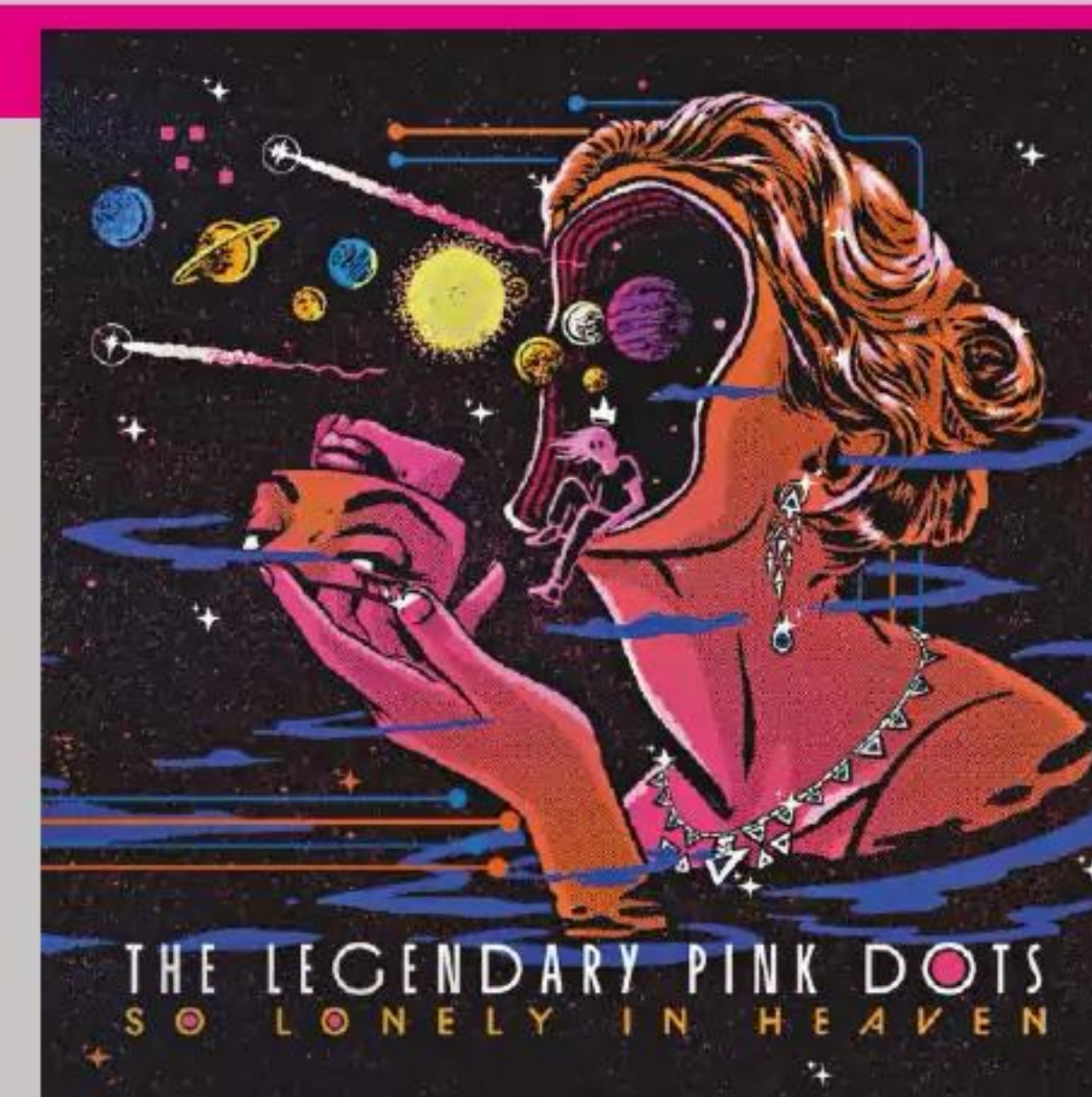
Kurt Sinclair-Hall

For more information on Tim Muddiman's art and music visit www.timmuddiman.com

SO LONELY IN HEAVEN THE LEGENDARY PINK DOTS

METROPOLIS

The opening announcement to start the album sets the tone immediately: "It is with my sincerest regret that I now consider you to be surplus to requirements. The door is over there." That's as optimistic as the message gets, as the avant-garde tracks unfold presenting a landscape of abandonment and dystopian futility somewhat akin to the writings of JG Ballard. So Lonely in Heaven is a cutting social commentary and provides a morose reflection of troubled souls and obsolescence of our seemingly doomed humanity. An album filled with juxtaposed messages, themes and textures, ultimately this is no fluffy fairytale. This is thought-provoking and intriguing throughout, with some discontinuity between songs



as they change in tempo, style and genre along the way. That said, it's a stunning production with assured musicianship, lush blankets of synthesizer, pretty arpeggiators, discordant guitars and other-worldly vocal treatment.

It may take a number of replays to fully appreciate the detail and craftsmanship of the album. Mesmerising, heartbreaking, haunting and eccentric... and overall, a work that demands respect. ●

Kurt Sinclair-Hall

TWICE A MAN THE COLOURED BREEZE IS A NEW DIMENSION

Dependent

Described as Swedish electronic environmentalists, Twice A Man currently comprises Dan Söderqvist on vocals, and Karl Gasleben and Jocke Söderqvist on electronics. The Coloured Breeze Is A New Dimension released on 13 June 2025 is the latest in a long line of LPs that the band have put out since their debut in 1982, and it continues to pursue many of the musical themes that the band have established over the course of the past forty years; ambient meets dramatic electro on lead single and album opener 'Birds Eye View', for instance, whilst second-half highlight 'Trembling Forest' is a blend of gloomy coldwave and atmospheric electronics. In this

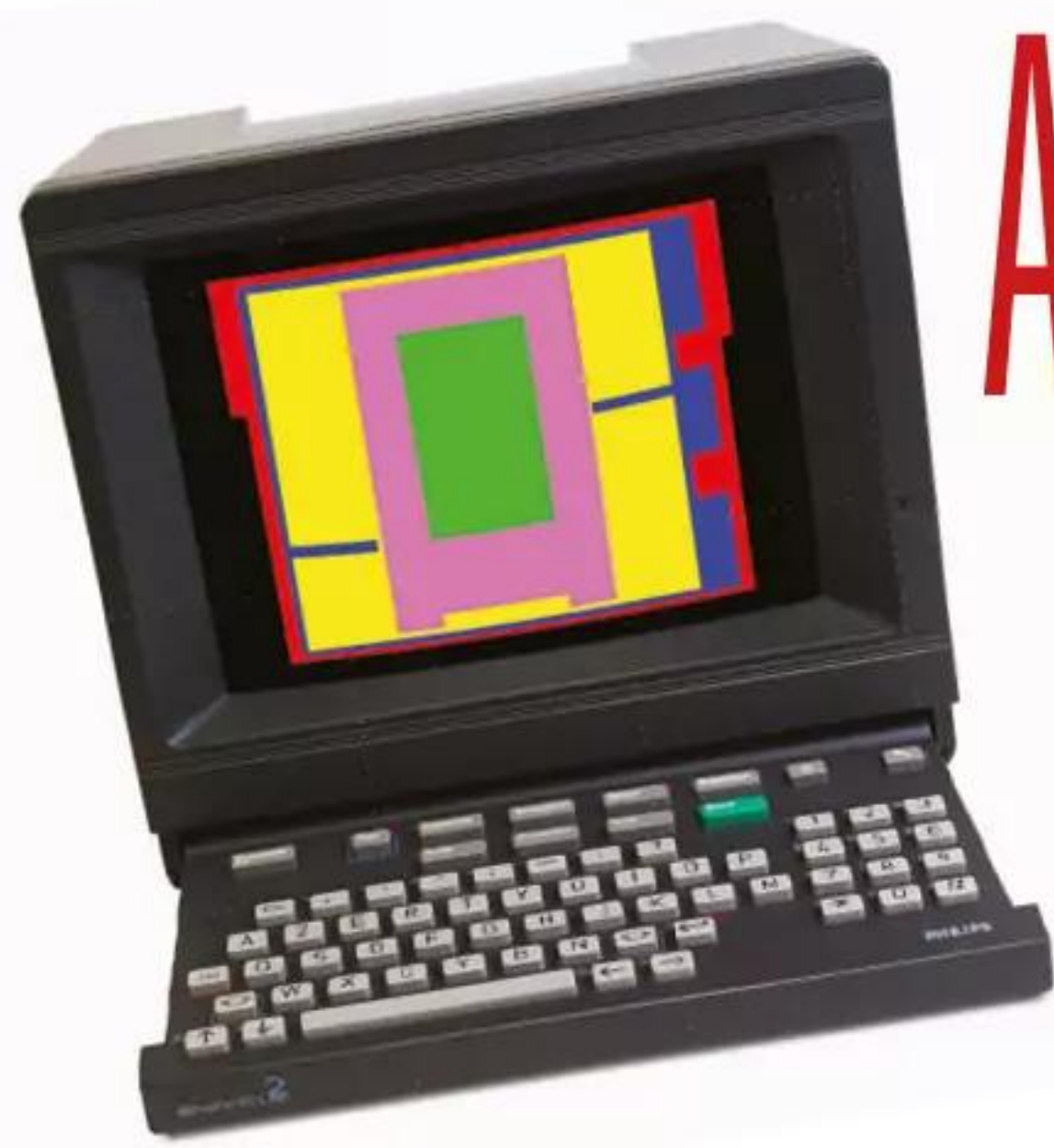


sense, the album doesn't offer anything groundbreaking - at least not in the context of the band's history - but it does provide a fresh take on their penchant for genre blending, with Söderqvist's emotion-wracked vocals always keeping things from straying too far from the band's core sound. The highlight is probably 'Unknown Threads', a six-minute exploration of dramatic, techno-infused rhythms and bold, melodic synth lines. ●

Imogen Bebb

A TIME BEFORE THE INTERNET?

ELECTRIC DREAMS AT TATE MODERN



By Mik Scarlet



It was a nice day and so off my wife and I tripped off to Tate Modern, on London's Southbank. It's a fascinating museum, and we booked tickets for two exhibitions in one day. First was the Leigh Bowery exhibition, which is being reviewed by Marc Massive elsewhere in this esteemed magazine. I must admit I never got Bowery at the time. They seemed obsessed with the grotesque at a time when we were all trying to be beautiful. As they weren't a bad looking individual, it was beyond me. Looking around the exhibits though, I finally understood. They opened the door for what was to come, Marilyn Manson, Gaga and Monster Queen. They created the anti-aesthetic that made ugly beautiful and imperfect perfection. We left with fond memories of the time and excitedly skipped to the Electric Dreams show.

I have to declare it wasn't what I expected. Mainly because it went way further back than before the internet. Like WAY back. Early 1900s, rather than the 1960s, which is what I thought it might cover and it's how it was described by the Tate. Not saying it wasn't fascinating and illuminating but maybe a little more basic than expected. That said, I was drawn in instantly. So much creativity using the most basic of electronics. In some cases, it was more cardboard, lights and coloured gels, which made me think of the sets in *Space 1999*. It was more like the stuff that came before the stuff that led to the stuff we grew up with, that led to the 80s. As I said, way before the internet.

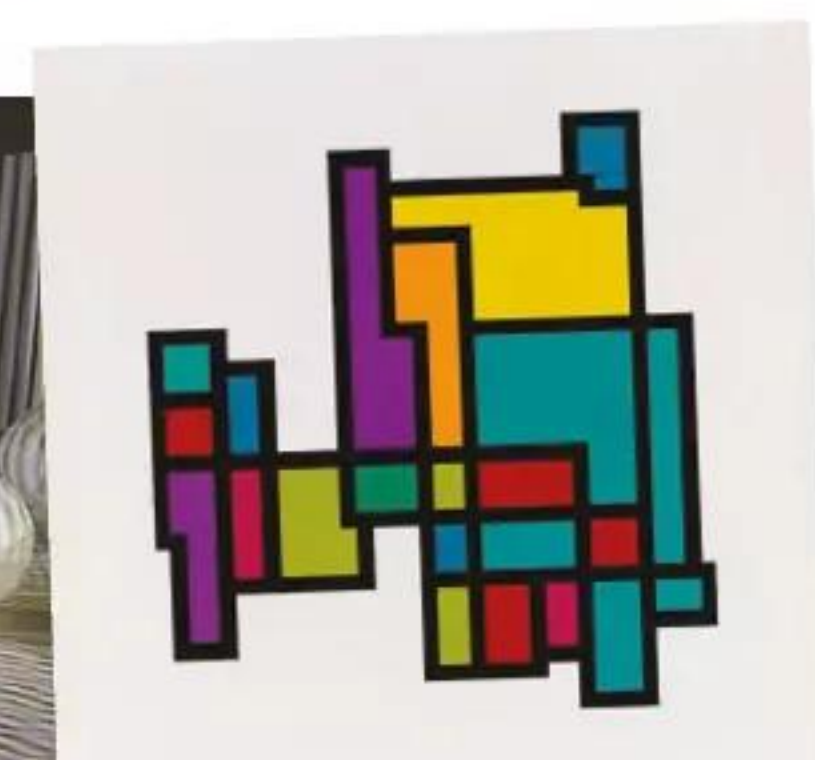
As we wandered the rooms, it was amazing to see how so much had been made with such basic tech. In one room Carlos Cruz-Diez had created a light filled lightscape filled with shapes,

boxes and spheres. I wheeled around gingerly, after a few experiences being told off for running over works in the past (a joy of being a wheelchair user), before a family came in the kids started booting the spheres all over the room. I realised that they weren't solid but inflated balloons. Interactive and fun. Slightly discombobulating too. Another room was painted in bright scarlet and electric blue shapes that also threw you off balance, but annoyingly it also brought on a migraine for my poor wife. Art that makes you ill? Hmm? Our pace increased as I personally might suffer for Blitized, but I wasn't going to make my wife go through a migraine for you all dear readers.

Even in our panicked state, Diane insisted we stop at a few pieces. The room, *LightRoom* by Otto Piene, was a respite from some of the more colourful noisy pieces. Filled with timed bulbs inside boxes with holes and patterns cut in them, it was a revelation of what can be achieved with so little. A perfect idea for a simple stage set. It made you feel a little like you were in space. Or looking at a map of the stars.

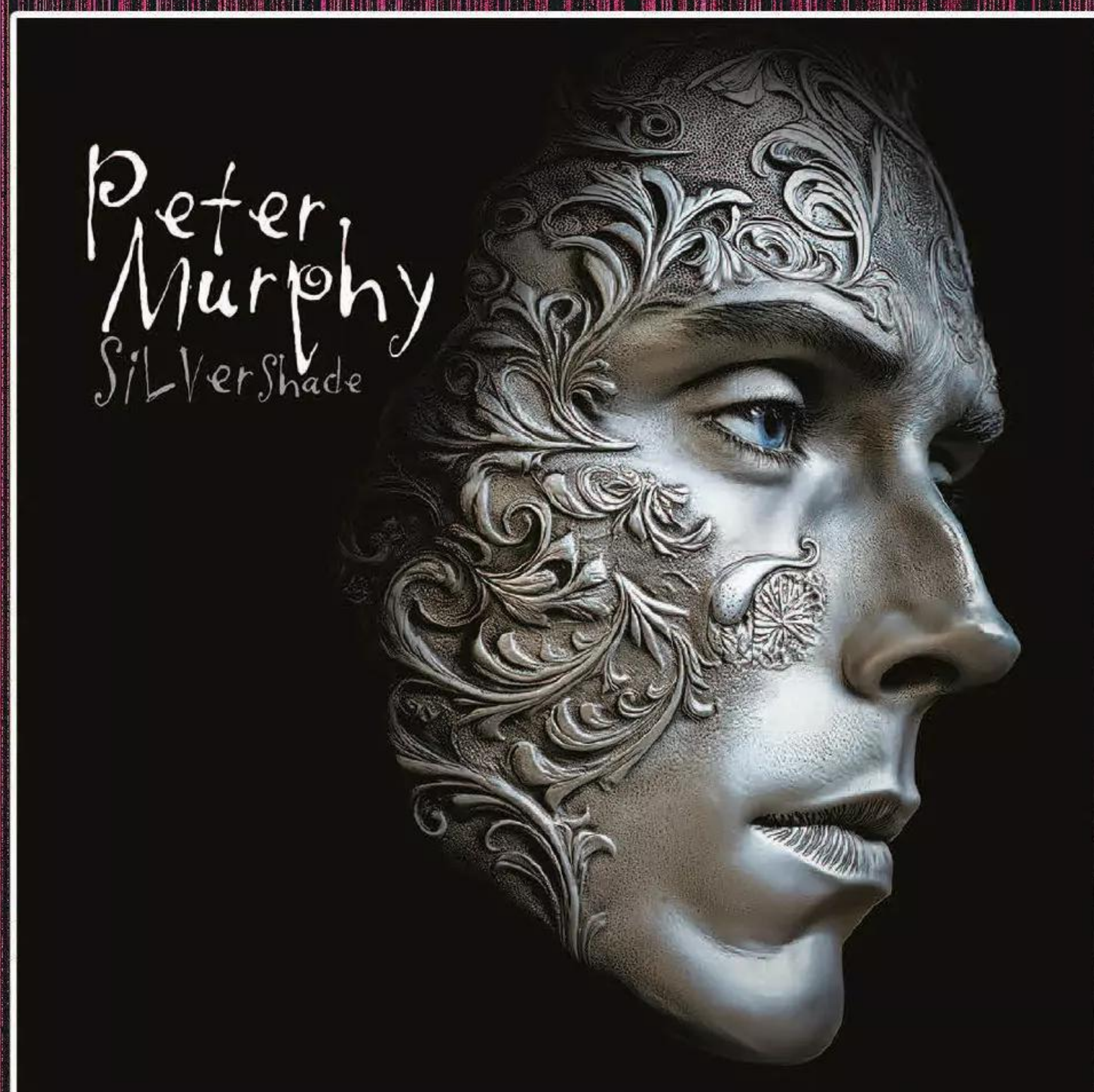
Works like Marina Apollonio's *Dinamica Circolare* just drew you in and made you fall into them as if falling into a black hole, and a piece that was the first computer-controlled art animation was super trippy. It also was like looking at a baby AI, so I've now seen the forerunner of the Terminator. OK, it wasn't what I was hoping for. No early synth soundscapes or video editing strangeness of the 1980s, but it did stir something inside me creatively.

It's a show that makes you think you don't need all the gear. You can be creative with the simplest of tools, the most basic of materials and still be groundbreaking. It's a walk, or wheel, through the very beginnings of what became the influences of the New Romantics and Futurist music movements, as well as pretty much everything Gerry Anderson created. Yes, no internet, but also no programmable computers, other than Spectrums, and nothing like what was coming in only a short time. Throughout *Electric Dreams* I could see where the Human League and Cabaret Voltaire et al gained their aesthetic. They just needed 2000AD comics and Captain Scarlet into the mix, with the release of affordable synths and bingo. A revolution in style, music and fashion. *Electric Dreams* will be on at the Tate Modern until June 1st 2025. Well worth a visit, especially if you are also taking in the Leigh Bowery show. ●





METROPOLIS RECORDS



PETER MURPHY – Silver Shade

Produced by Youth, this is the first studio album for a decade by the post-punk/goth rock icon "His ability to conjure up romanticised imagery from sometimes abstract but descriptive verse sets him apart from his peers. An album that oozes quality" BLITZED

"It's all high drama, dark figures and wild impulses. Hugely entertaining, and when Murphy sings 'this is the meaning of my life', you don't doubt it for a second" MOJO

"A deliciously bubbling cauldron seasoned with ladles of Scott Walker melodrama and a generous pinch of Bowie-inspired balladry 8/10" UNCUT

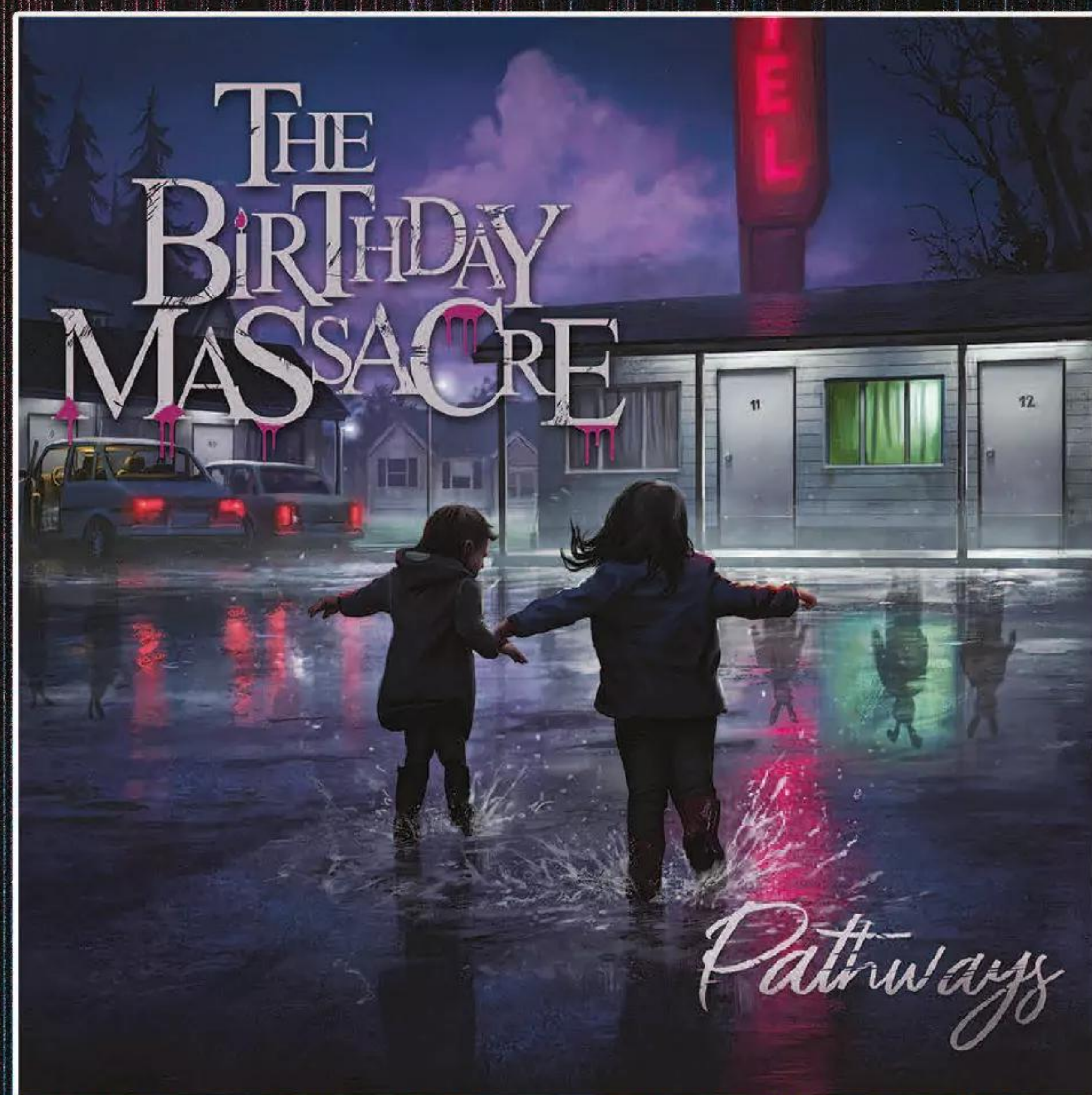
"Glistens in the dark, displaying a myriad of visages and moving subtly between the playful, sombre and iridescent 8/10" VIVE LE ROCK

THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE – Pathways

The beloved Canadian dark pop/goth band are back with a high-octane set of new songs.

"An excellent goth/electronic rock album with elements of light and dark throughout. Its lush, cinematic production suits the band's dynamic qualities" BLITZED

"Skilful interplay between electronic beats and goth sensibilities highlights a band at the very top of their game. Their strongest, most definitive album to date 8/10" VIVE LE ROCK



metropolis-records.com

metropolisrecords.bandcamp.com

deejaydead.de/de/metropolis1

plastichead.com/music

THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE PATHWAYS

METROPOLIS RECORDS

I have found the experience of living in this first quarter of the 21st century marked by moments of fragile beauty and hope, surrounded by periods of heavy intensity and despair. Such coexisting duality is reflected in the signature sound of Canada's 'The Birthday Massacre' and a propelling force on their newest venture, *Pathways*. These 8 tracks showcase their flair for combining heavy riffs with haunting melodies in their songs.

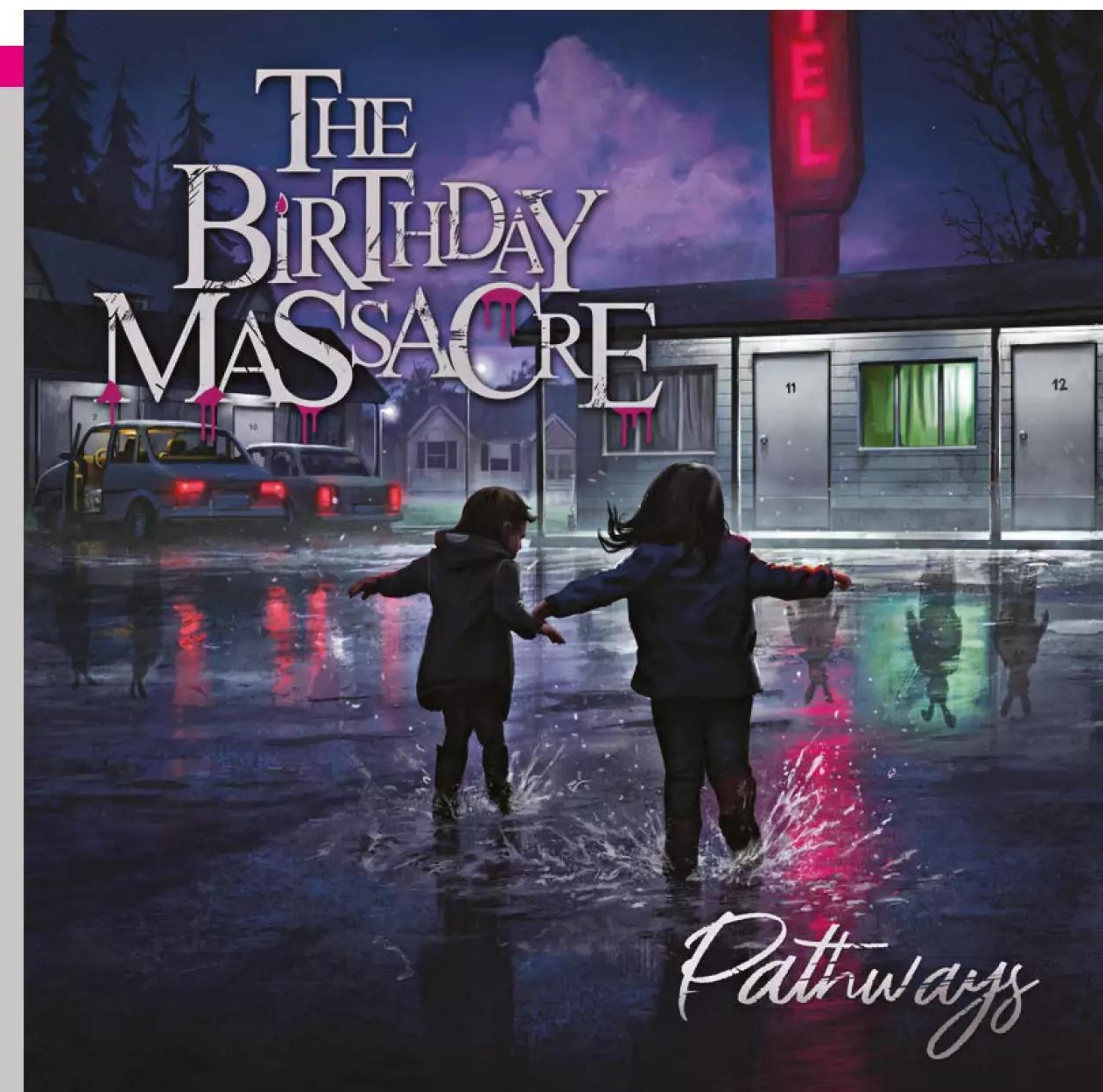
Pathways is the band's tenth studio album, released on 11th April 2025 on Metropolis records. It follows 2022's *Fascination*, which made its mark on the Billboard charts. While formed in 1999, they broke through in 2005 with the release of their album *Violet*, and songs such as 'Blue' and 'Happy Birthday'.

The new album begins with its first single, 'Sleep Tonight'. After a few seconds of ambient feedback we are awakened by crunching guitar riffs and electronic rhythms. After a few repetitions, these clear out of the way to make room for Sara 'Chibi' Taylor's delicate and melodic vocals, lyrically exploring how our own memories and regrets can haunt us. These push/pull dynamics propel us towards a soaring, epic, chorus underlined by power chords.

'All Of You' follows up with no less intensity and more of the band's distinctive contrast between sections. A simple, heavily chorused guitar theme precedes the verses and sets the tone as the listener is once again led gently by hand towards another grandiose refrain.

Like a breath of fresh air, the gentle pad sounds of 'The Vanishing Game' introduce the following song not unlike a New Order track before the band's trademark riffing enters the mix. Layers of synthesizer and a less extreme differential between the song's sections create a more accessible sound.

The title track marks the halfway point of the album by wasting no time getting to the hooks and meat of the song. It continues the accessibility of the previous song but showcases what feels like a more personal



and intimate vocal.

'Whisper' brings back the heavy and dark vs delicate and dawning dichotomy that marked the first two tracks but goes to farther extremes. In places the vocal becomes a bit menacing and witchy, in others soothing and reassuring. Often, in the softer sections we can hear how the synthesizer lines echo the beauty and fragility of those quieter parts.

Probably the most radio friendly track on the album from its opening chords, 'Wish' underlines shimmering guitar with pulsating bass synth. The usual heavy/soft contrast in their music is replaced here with a steady, layered sound suitable for bringing hordes of black clad clubbers to a dance floor. Truly shows the new wave side of the band's music here to great effect.

The heaviness returns to introduce 'Faces', tight, crunchy, and aggressive before giving way to lush pads and a vulnerable sounding vocal line. The track's intensity builds throughout its sections and contains a magnificent guitar phrase that introduces the refrains.

Closing the album, 'Cruel Love' begins by

slowly layering a chord progression across several instruments for nearly a full minute before we hear any singing. The manner in which the melodic layers interlock in the track reminds me of the Cure from the 'Disintegration' era a bit, where every part seems to be given a chance to breathe. The song leaves me reflecting on the album up to this point. It FEELS like an album closer, bittersweet and ruminant.

Overall, I'd describe *Pathways* as an excellent goth / electronic rock album with elements of light and dark throughout. Its lush, cinematic production suits the nature of the songs and lyrics and the band's dynamic qualities. Fans of electro-goth will find much to love here - but the sound of this work does not limit itself to hardcore fans of any particular genre. Though such a concert may not be 'my scene' per se, I'd enjoy seeing how this material comes across in a live setting... and I may just have my chance this year, with The Birthday Massacre starting a North American tour on the 29th of March and in the UK starting October 24th. ●

D.D.Danahy

PETER MURPHY SILVER SHADE

Metropolis Records

Peter Murphy returns with the first long player since his critically acclaimed *Lion* album in 2014, where we find the Bauhaus frontman not only in good health but in fine voice, ably assisted once more by Martin 'Youth' Glover (*Killing Joke*) on production duties. 'This new album is as powerful as any of my work to date' reads the press release and after the first of many listens, I tend to agree. Where *Lion* felt like a resurgence, an artist intent on reclaiming his crown, the new album *Silver Shade*, incidentally also the name given to his label set up to release live and unreleased material, Murphy's 11th studio album shows an artist continuing that journey with renewed vigour.

After a ten-year gap between albums, *Silver Shade* doesn't disappoint. The two singles already released show his ability to lend his soaring vocal across two very different musical styles. The first single, 'Let the Flowers Grow', is an emotionally charged ballad, a duet with Boy George, coming out of the blue to close 2024 in grandiose gothic style. An unlikely collaboration of two iconic voices that worked so beautifully. Recent release 'Swoon' featuring Trent Reznor on guest vocals and being no stranger to past collaborations together, with its funkier, percussive beats and industrial leanings, couldn't be more different.

It's this more experimental track with Bowie-esque 'China Girl' style vocals, that incongruously opens the album. It feels like a standalone single rather than an intro to an album, especially one that offers a plethora of potential singles.

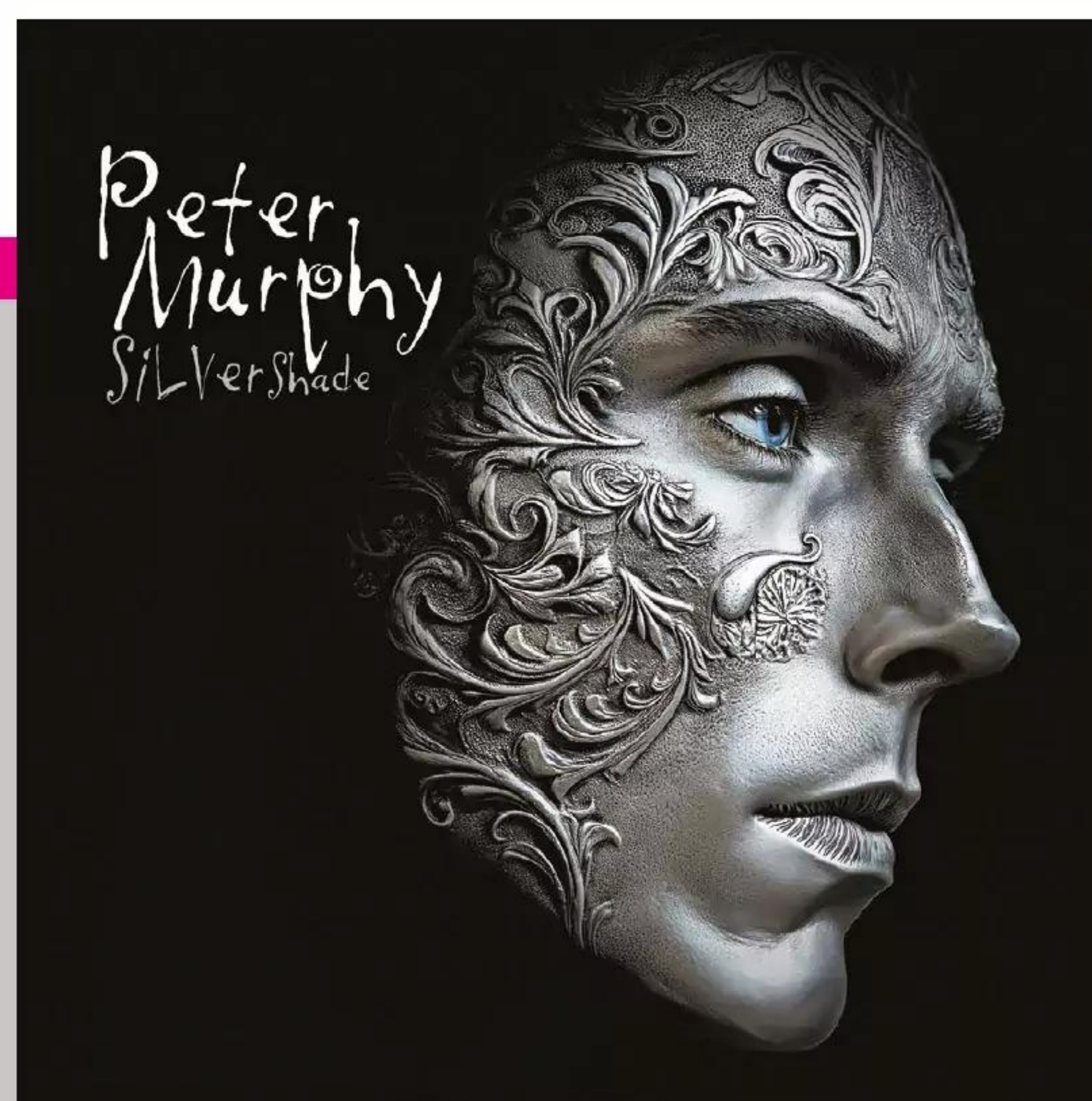
The electronic entrance of 'Hot Roy' melding into rock-powered guitar riffs, alongside a vocal-driven rollercoaster ride that we've come to expect from Murphy, returns us to a more familiar footing. The line 'we catch silver bullets when saving our heroes' soars effortlessly skywards, setting the pace for the rest of the album, perhaps his most accessible in years.

Memorable melodies delivered with emotional conviction remind us what a criminally underrated artist Peter Murphy is. A victim of his genre-defining early career successes and labelled as the 'Godfather of Goth', this tag only served to place him in a convenient box, where 'nothing ever happens' whilst stifling the true free spirit we find here.

The title track 'Silver Shade' suggests a metaphorical deep dive into a glistening river, as the sun casts shade upon silver waves. A reference to water and seas that seemingly flows throughout the album into the soundwaves now streaming into my ears. His strikingly silver-faced appearance on the gorgeous album cover, with stony blue eyes like deep rivers, further enhances my interpretation of the art.

It's Murphy's ability to conjure up romanticised imagery from sometimes abstract but descriptive verse that sets him apart from his peers. Inviting us to discover far-off lands with his poetic prose, citing 'Dalis Car', his uniquely timeless 1984 collaboration with Japan's Mick Karn for reference, and through his love of traditional Turkish instrumentation, this enables a true depth of meaning to his impressive legacy.

Influenced by his permanent relocation to Istanbul in the early 90s, which inspired the 2002 album *Dust*, we find flourishes here in songs like 'Meaning of My Life', one of the album's highs. A powerful wall of sound with strings swirling around a demanding chorus vocal hook that's desperate to tell us the meaning of his life. The unusually titled 'Xavier New Boy', which given the absence of a lyric sheet to peruse at the time of reviewing, its meaning somewhat remains mysterious to my virgin ears, but that doesn't detract from its enjoyment, and further references to 'big fish in the sea'



leave me pondering the watery themed significance.

Perhaps echoing Youth's recording studio location where the album was produced, Spanish-infused guitars continue the acoustic string flavourings in 'Time Waits' for no man, not even Peter, who is in a reflective mood. 'Conchita is Lame' acts as a commentary that starts with a feline sassy swagger of a man-eater stalking prey. Swooping in to claim her next victim, hungry for fame but too young to fully understand the implications of courting the attention of an older, male celebrity. At what point does the hunter become the hunted?

Traditional rock vibes permeate through 'Soothsayer', and the drum and guitar-led 'Sherpa' with its upbeat and catchy sing-along chorus is a pleasant addition to add sway.

Through Youth's masterful production, the many beautiful layers of sound lift soul-searching and often emotionally charged vocals across an entire album that oozes quality in streams. 'Sailmakers Charm', the final track is a good example of this, whilst bringing a perfect collection of songs to a dramatic crescendo, with 'Let the Flowers Grow' added as a bonus track to the double vinyl and CD formats.

Available 9th May from
www.petermurphy.info ●
Marc Massive

TANGERINE DREAM PHAEDRA 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

UMR/EMI

When Tangerine Dream's enigmatic album *Phaedra* was released in February 1974, its success surprised everyone involved, particularly as the album's popularity was largely generated by word of mouth with virtually no airplay. The classic line-up of Edgar Froese, Christoph Franke and Peter Baumann had crafted something special – and its popularity with the public proved that a somewhat leftfield electronic music release could still resonate with a wide audience. As an album, it's a textbook example of 'Kosmische Musik' (a phrase that Froese himself had come up with). Now *Phaedra* sees a timely reissue, just slightly behind the album's 50th Anniversary, with a new box set which seeks to celebrate Tangerine Dream's ambient opus.

The album originally emerged from recording sessions at the Manor studios in Oxfordshire in 1973. Their weapons of choice included a Mellotron, a modular Moog and a clutch of VCS3 synths. Intriguingly, despite *Phaedra*'s established status as an exemplar electronic album, during the album's creation there was perhaps less of a reverential attitude to technology than people might suspect. "We didn't have to have the electronic synthesiser to create the style" commented Franke on the album's genesis, "the idea was there and then we looked for the instruments".

Prior to signing to Richard Branson's Virgin label, Tangerine Dream had already built up a profile in their native Germany via underground label Ohr and *Phaedra* actually marked the band's fifth album release. The band had carefully honed their craft on those early releases, yet their latest album was something that raised the bar further. "Phaedra was the first album in which many things had to be structured" mused Froese in 2019, "The reason was that we were using the Moog sequencer (all driving bass notes) for the first time."

Much of the recording process for *Phaedra* was one of frustration, particularly

because the Moog took several hours to tune. Plus, they were beset by a host of other technical issues, including the tape machine breaking down, console failures and damage to the speakers caused by the low frequencies of the bass notes. "By the eleventh day we barely had six minutes of music," recalled Edgar Froese in a 1994 interview. But the trio were nothing if not persistent in their efforts. In fact, the technical issues that they endured often became part of the creative process. During the sessions, as the equipment would warm up, some of the temperature-sensitive oscillators began to detune. The album's title track, as a result, features some of these quirky elements which became part of the composition's sound.

Phaedra's title track spans the length of the first side of the original album and there's something mesmerising about its shift between uplifting tonal moods through to unsettling alien burbling. This isn't to say the rest of the tracks lack their own magic. Take the warm and evocative 'Mysterious Semblance at the Strand of Nightmares', a composition conjured up by Froese on the Mellotron. There's a hymnal quality to this piece; a meditative slice of electronica that the listener can immerse themselves in. Meanwhile, the ambient 'Sequent C' was crafted by Peter Baumann utilising wooden recorder elements to produce a more ethereal effect with its gauzy drifting soundscapes.

This 50th Anniversary release spans six discs and includes a remastered version of the original album, studio outtakes and a live recording of the band's first ever UK show from June 1974 at Victoria Palace Theatre. There's also a Blu-ray with Steven Wilson's 5.1 Surround Sound mix for dedicated audiophiles. An illustrated book with a new essay by Tangerine Dream

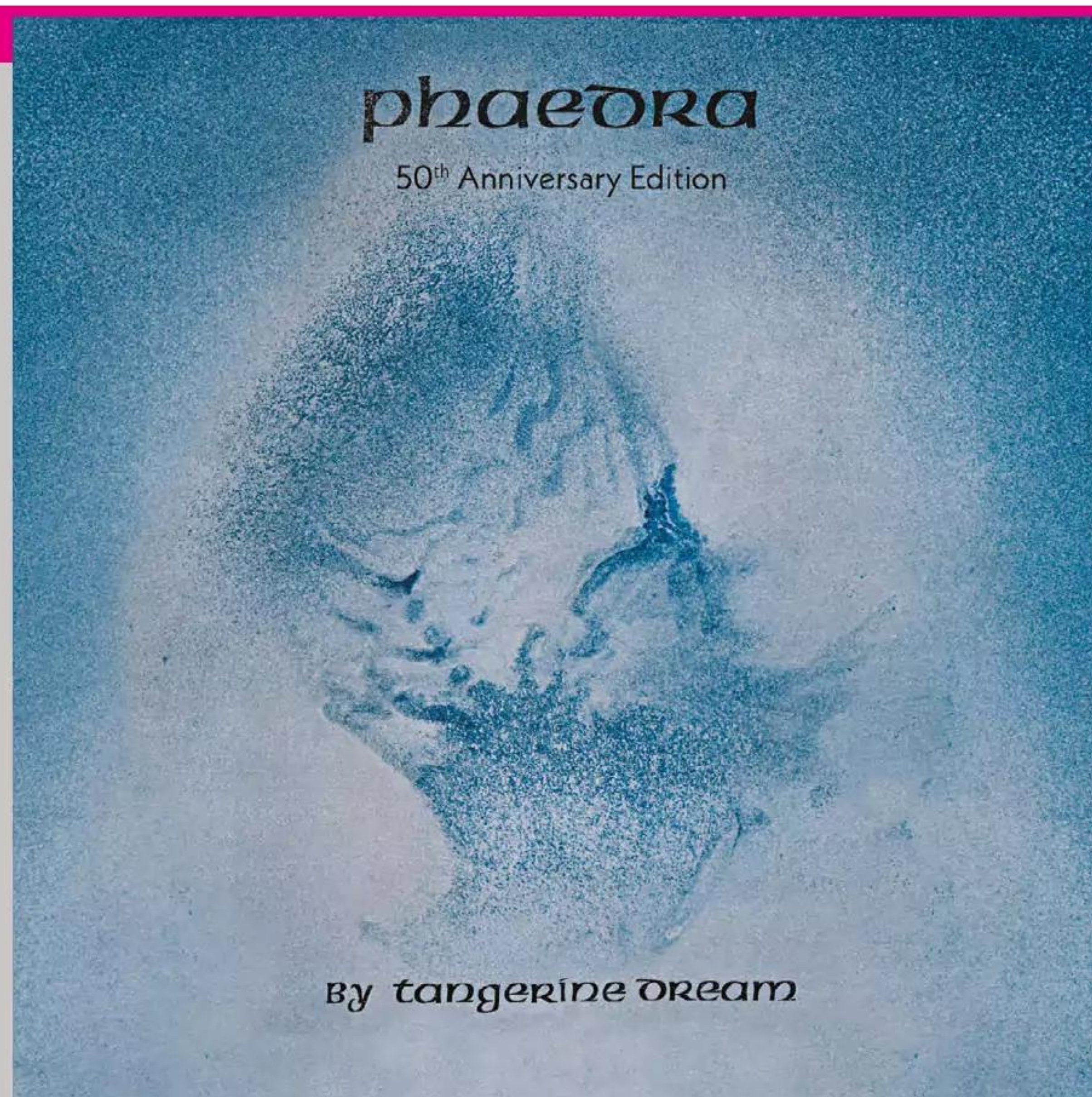
authority Wouter Bessels is also included.

The additional material, variously listed as out-takes and side pieces, could be summed up as variations on a theme. That said, tracks such as 'Flute Organ Piece' offer up an airier ambience distinct from *Phaedra*'s harder, more obvious electronic compositions. Meanwhile, the spooky '2nd Side Piece 2' offers up discordant qualities in places that can be eerie and unsettling. Although not essential, this additional content is perfect not only for completists, but also for listeners who want their *Phaedra* experience to be extended.

Tangerine Dream die-hards will likely already be familiar with the content here as it previously featured on 2019's expansive *In Search of Hades 1973-1979* box set, But this release also offers a good stepping-on point for those people discovering Tangerine Dream for the first time.

As an album, *Phaedra* is a strange, often haunting affair which must have sounded even stranger when it was released back in 1974. Its legacy endures as a pioneering electronic music album, one which also helped to lay the foundations for how electronic music would be created as well as culturally appreciated in the years to follow (John Foxx once described *Phaedra* as "psychedelia under the floorboard"). Five decades later and it remains a timeless, cosmic epic. ●

Paul Browne



SIMPLE MINDS

LIVE IN THE CITY OF DIAMONDS

BMG

The cynical may question the need for another Simple Minds live album, and on paper, they would likely be justified—since 2012, there have been a grand total of six official live physical format releases: 5X5 Live, Celebrate - Live at the Hydro, Big Music Tour 2015, Acoustic In Concert, Live in the City of Angels and New Gold Dream - Live from Paisley Abbey.

From L.A. to Paisley Abbey, and now the 17,000-capacity Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam for a show recorded on April 6th, 2024. It may not need reiterating, but Simple Minds have a 'complex' relationship with their fans. Although not unique, few bands have a fan base so sharply divided. From the 'nothing after New Gold Dream' diehards to the stadium rock lovers who feel *Street Fighting Years* is an underrated gem and can think of nothing better than hearing an extended version of 'Belfast Child'. Remember, the excellent biography by Graeme Thomson, *Themes for Great Cities*, tellingly calls time on their story just as the ascendance to stadiums was cemented with the arrival of the 2.2 million-selling *Once Upon a Time*.

Then there are the sometimes perplexing, or at least frustrating, creative decisions Jim and Charlie make—such as 'going acoustic.' For all those who enjoyed hearing acoustic versions of Simple Minds classics, there were listeners who questioned whether there could be any other act less suited for such a move. In terms of creative timing, it seemed to undermine the consistent steps back to solid ground the band had been making since 2005's *Black and White 050505*.

Subsequent to the acoustic album, we've received the very good *Walk Between*

Worlds but then the disappointing *Direction of the Heart*. It's not that *Direction* was a bad album, more that the gulf between it and greatness was so painfully vast.

So, how does *City of Diamonds* figure in their long and winding career? Well, actually, the omens were good as soon as possibly jaded eyes got to look at that night's setlist.

Not a huge surprise to see 'Waterfront'

Fascination' elevates this performance from the humdrum to the vital, even allowing for Kerr's over-prominent exhortations for the crowd to "put their hands in the air." As a punishing 'Sweat in Bullet' gives way to the off-kilter motoric grandeur of *Empires and Dance* highlight 'This Fear of Gods', the deal is sealed.

The trick of inserting three-song sections from specific albums allows a mood to be developed before switching gears and delving into other discographical time zones.

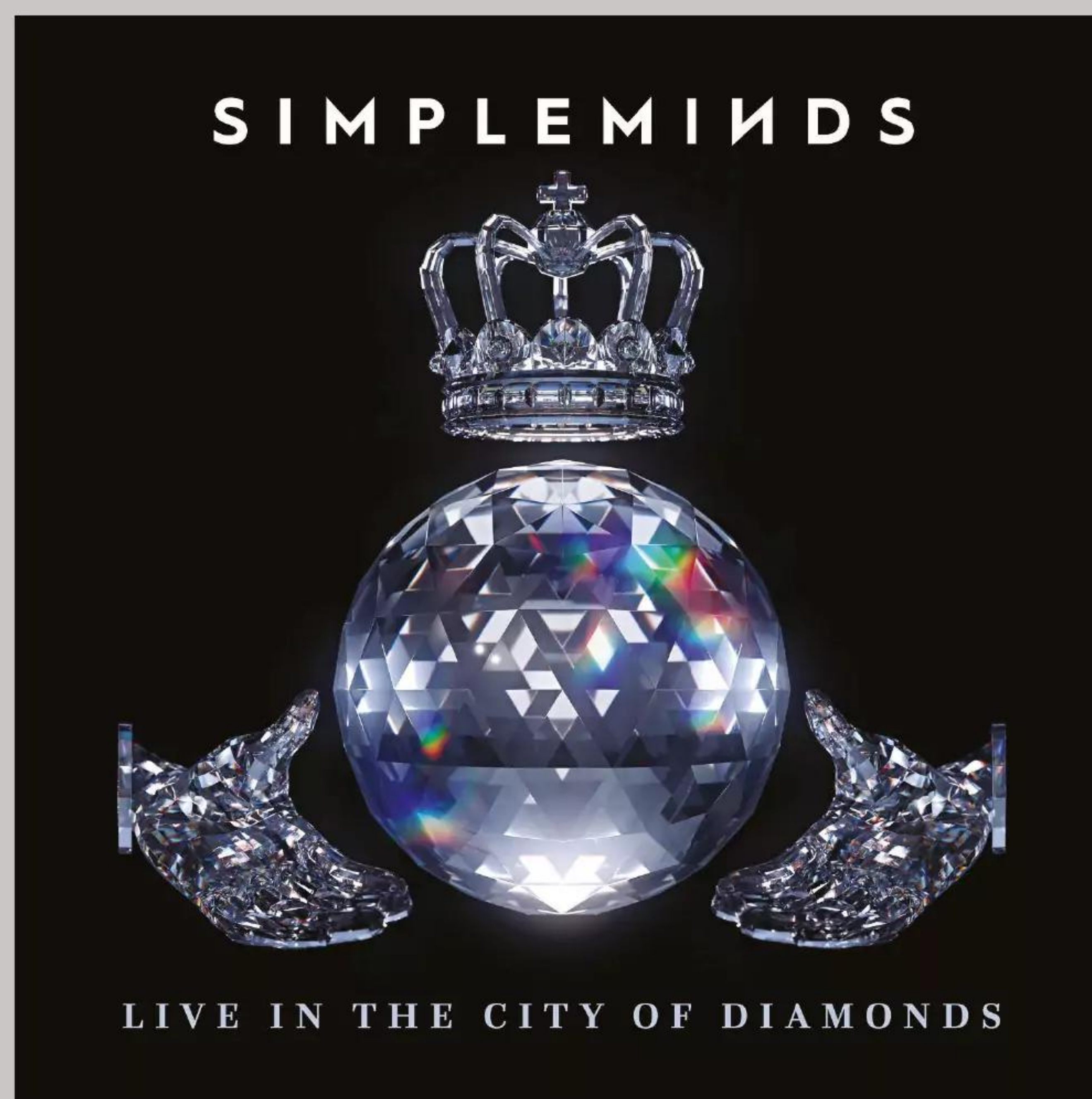
For some, the presence of 'Belfast Child' will likely be an eminently skippable, overlong ten-minute-plus 'moment.' Indeed, imagine the jewels that could instead have been plucked from their storied back catalogue.

Still, maybe even those who jumped ship post 'Don't You Forget About Me' will struggle not to feel the anthemic force of the gig's closing triptych, with that enduring '80s pop epic followed by 'Alive and Kicking' and then finally 'Sanctify Yourself.' It's as if the band is saying, "Yes, we can up the ante on perfect stadium-sized barn burners."

With deep cuts rubbing up against big hits, the unusual giving way to the far more straightforward—odd juxtapositions shedding new light on 30- to 40-year-old songs—*City of Diamonds* succeeds in demonstrating why people still want to see the band live. But beyond that, it throws into stark relief why they really need to get this lineup into a studio so the wrongs of the anaemic *Direction of the Heart* can be corrected.

The Simple Minds story needs a better conclusion, and this performance suggests they are at least physically capable of it. As to whether they still have the creative hunger, we can only wonder. ●

Simon Heavisides



present and correct and in pole position, but still, it's hard not to be carried away by its pummelling majesty. Jim is in more than fine voice, shifting from full-on stadium-pleasing mode one moment to an impressive velvet croon the next. A song purposefully written for large crowds that still soars all these years later.

However, it's the following, pretty audacious four-song stretch where *City of Diamonds* potentially earns its rightful place in their discography. A kinetic 'Love Song' powered by a raging Charlie Burchill flattens all resistance. To follow that with the strange beauty of 'Sons and

CYBER MONDAY STORE OVERDRIVE



One of the best things that new technology and the internet gave musicians is the freedom from the record industry. The level of body fascism I faced as a disabled lead singer was unbelievable and it hasn't changed. If you don't look like a popstar talent won't help you. Yes, they occasionally sign an outlier, to prove they aren't so bad, but one slightly large girl, or strange looking guy doesn't make up for the sea of rubber dolls that have graced our charts for far too long. Bandcamp freed us from the tyranny of A&R and marketing departments, and Cyber Monday are a perfect example of what we would have missed.

Store Overdrive is a stunning piece of work, a synhtastic electroscape of sound and emotion but the nameless Cyber Monday isn't your usual popstar. In the modern world their music is there for us to find and love. Continuing the theme of using Store in their albums titles, part of a back catalogue that just goes on and on, Store Overdrive makes me an instant fan.

I've not heard Cyber's stuff before and I now have a long journey ahead catching up with what is obviously a major talent in the new synth music scene. 'Guiding Heart' opens, capturing old school futurist synth feel with a touch of eurodisco and a big singalong chorus. 'Overdrive' takes me back to a dancefloor in Ibiza in 1986. Proper 80s male vocals, combining Pete Burns with Fad Gadget, the track would have packed the dancefloor of Heaven back then for sure. 'More Than Just A Feelin' is another that would have been huge on the early Hi-NRG scene, and a chart hit in 1985. A mood change for 'For I'm With You', a more slow ballad as if 'Being Boiled' had been gene spliced with 'Human'. 'Starlights Bliss' picks things up again, at a rollercoaster pace, before 'Stay' returns back to the robotic Hi-NRG sound. I'm really digging Cyber Monday. Nice.

As 'Chaos' kicks off the synths are just HUGE. Honestly CM is one hell of a songwriter, and his production is very very spot on. 'Arcade' has a feel of being

driven through a seaside town, lights flashing by the car as you both laugh at the strangeness of it all. 'Break Through' next and yet again a superb bit of songwriting. This time a big sounding hyperballad. As we draw to the end of Store Overdrive, 'Holding On' takes us away to a love song where CM opens his heart to us all. Lastly there's 'Don't Go - Store Version', with touches of Numan leads this is a perfect end. An album that's a have-to-have.

If I was to raise anything I'd say some more production on the vocals would make this an album that could not be beaten. But that would be picking nits. For anyone who hasn't discovered Cyber Monday yet, do yourself a massive favour. Say Mik sent you.

For more information go to www.cybermondaymusic.com

Mik Scarlet



ATTRITION*A PERMANENT VIEW? BLACK MARIA REMIXED*

TWO GODS

Based in Coventry and formed in 1980 by the multi-talented musician Martin Bowes, Attrition are an integral part of a vibrant UK underground electronic scene, and their music reaches out across the globe. A Permanent View? Black Maria Remixed is a 20-track remix album that follows The Black Maria, issued in 2024.

An eclectic compilation of remodelled songs that combine to create a standalone album of its own merit that includes, notably, 'The Alibi' – Singapore Fountains Remix, which provides a stunning opener with thumping drums, searing synthesisers and operatic accents, leading to 'The Great Derailer' – Don Quibeats Remix, a cool and vibrant coasting track of some sophistication. 'The Great Derailer' – Chiasm

Remix presents a more commercial pop melody that first seduces your ears and then lures you back into the darkness. With echoes of Yello, 'The Switch' – Digital Murder Remix by Martine is infused with a 90's dance vibe, and very unexpected. 'The Alibi' – Vaselyne – The Second Mix is a more abstract production cloaked in mystery, whereas 'The Great Derailer' – Kitty Lectro Remix is gloriously reminiscent of The Sisters of Mercy/The Cure meets Siouxsie and the Banshees. 'The Alibi' – Panoptica Mix is luxuriously bonkers, with interesting textures and a balance of creaking enigmatic vocals, funk bass synth, sporadic electronics and even a synthetic cowbell. 'The Great Derailer' – Khost Remix is a disturbing but highly mesmeric soundtrack to your worst nightmare, which you



can't escape, even if you wanted to. It's a fascinating album for sure. ●

Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Available from

www.attritionuk.bandcamp.com

We're All Crazy Americans

www.tinyurl.com/BogdonDetroit

MADE TO BE PLAYED AT FULL VOLUME

THE RUDE AWAKENING PLASTIC FRIEND EP

AbNormal

Gloriously triumphant in its circa 1981 leanings, The Rude Awakening team of Bridget and Johnny deliver on every level with their new song. This is catchier than herpes and fluffier than a knickerbocker glory served in a Wimpy. Plastic Friend, we all have them (often plural), and we're not talking about the flexible variety that breaks the bank every month. The Rudies pull no punches with their cheeky take-down of those fake 'fair weather' friends that leave us emotionally bankrupt, whilst providing the excuse to dance on their ashes. Too extreme? Perhaps, but not when delivered in a perfectly synonymous 80s squeaky clean synth and Syndrum-heavy way.

"I will care for you....I will destroy you!" sings the robotic-voiced opening lyric alongside Bridget's harmonic vocals on a track that could seamlessly segue between the Mode's 'New Life' and the 'Happy Birthday' chant of Altered Images, where catchy chorus repetition is a must and free expression down the disco sorts the men from the boys.

What I love about these guys is their acceptance of, and homage to, the greatest pop decade. An unadulteratedly wholesome trip down memory lane whilst knowing what makes a good pop tune fizz, not afraid to fly the nostalgia flag, and correctly reading the current climate and our need to return to happier times through the soundtrack of our youth. And boy, did it make me smile and feel a lot happier than I did before pressing play. There was a time when this style of song could slip effortlessly into the mainstream subconscious and become a nation's earworm for a few weeks of chart action. But The Rudies don't worry about such triviality because they've got authenticity and a good heart worn with pride on the sleeve of their immaculate virginal white matching stage apparel. Adding to the appeal is the knowledge that whilst making music together they have become more than bandmates, being romantically linked makes for a perfect 'O L'Amour' pop duo moment and the icing on the cake. A plethora of remixes from the likes of Nature Of Wires, Peter Duggal and



Jean-Marc Lederman seals the deal with a sugar-coated kiss.

Plastic Friend 10 track EP is available from download stores and streaming platforms, with a radio edit and remixes from Peter Duggal, Patrik Kambo, Nature of Wires, LorD and Master, Konzept, Jean-Marc Lederman, dEk101 and D.D. Danahy. ●

Marc Massive



www.therudeawakening.rocks

MIDGE URE LIVE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL 04.10.23

Chrysalis

As most Blitzed readers will likely already know, Midge Ure is not a man to do things by halves, something amply evidenced by this new box set which showcases a one-night-only performance he undertook at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall in 2023. Presented across three LPs or three CDs and in simple but elegant packaging, listeners can expect to hear 27 tracks split into four different sets: acoustic, electric, Ultravox's 1980 studio album Vienna in its entirety, and a slew of greatest hits from assorted moments in his career. And if that's not enough for you, the whole thing has been mixed by acclaimed audio engineer Richard Whittaker (who has previously worked with Ultravox, Thin Lizzy, and The Who) and overseen by Mr. Ure himself.

One of the things you'll notice instantly is just how little many of these songs have aged; tracks like Ultravox single 'Reap the Wild Wind', and Ure solo cuts 'Guns and Arrows' and 'Breathe' sound like they could have been written yesterday, whilst the Ure/Phil Lynott co-write 'Yellow Pearl' still sounds fresh, despite being used as the theme tune to Top of the Pops from 1981 to 1986 (and as such probably remains maddeningly familiar to most listeners). Ure's voice has also aged notably well, sounding noticeably more rugged, but still as rich and emotive as it does on some of those early Ultravox records. A surprise highlight is an acoustic version of 'The Maker' - an album cut from Ure's 1996 solo LP Breathe - which is transformed from an uplifting track with a marching beat to a mellow, lilting ballad

with gentle hues of accordion. Another high point - but one that comes as less of a surprise - is the era-defining 'Vienna', which is as steeped in romance and drama as it has ever been.

Anyone even vaguely familiar with Midge Ure's work will probably have automatically assumed that the music featured on this box was going to be top notch, such is Ure's reputation among fans of 1980s music, and indeed popular music more generally. It is testament to his talents, then, that this box set meets those incredibly high expectations, proving that he is still a brilliant live performer whose estimable reputation is much deserved. ●

Imogen Bebb



JOHN FOXX WHEREVER YOU ARE

Metamatic Records

Ex-Ultravox! frontman John Foxx has covered a lot of musical ground since he first embarked on a solo career in 1980, dipping his toes into the waters of art rock, contemporary pop, minimal electro, and even ambient music. Now, he's adding solo piano instrumentals to this list, in the form of his achingly beautiful sixteenth studio album, *Wherever You Are*.

Mostly recorded at home and in the early hours of the morning following his 2023 live performance at a Radio 3 event in London, all eleven pieces here are keenly intimate, evoking that deeply-felt contemplativeness that can only really be experienced when one is alone. Indeed, from Foxx's own description of writing the album, it sounds as though this feeling was definitely something that was on his

mind: "Some notes and sounds resonate with remembered experiences, and you get glimpses of times and people" he says, "It's valuable. Quiet. Free association, myriad moments orbiting - and off you go".

It's difficult to pick particular highlights from *Wherever You Are*, not because all the pieces sound alike - which is often a danger with an instrumental album that employs only one instrument - but rather because the eleven pieces fit so well together that to pick just one or two would be to disrupt the rhythm of the album as a whole. It is, then, best to start with the delicate, meditative opening track 'When She Walked in with The Dawn', and proceed to listen to *Wherever You Are* straight through, allowing Foxx's gentle piano meanderings to guide you through those "remembered experiences" and "glimpses of times and people".



Revealing more about the inspirations behind the album, Foxx explained: "Lately I'm realising how we get formed by other people. Everyone we know or knew, who affects the way we think and the way we see things - even in a small way, has a voice, and all those voices remain in a sort of lifelong conversation. I hear them all the time. It's not at all frantic, it's more oceanic - calm and pleasant". Coincidentally, those final four words capture the essence of *Wherever You Are* perfectly - an album that embodies calmness, serenity, and the ebb and flow of our own emotional tides. ●

Imogen Bebb

FRAGILE SELF OCD

THE DEPERSON SOCIETY



When the nine track *OCD* album by London duo Fragile Self landed in the Blitzed office, we had no idea that one half of the music partnership was Grammy Award-winning designer Jonathan Barnbrook, known for his stunning work with David Bowie, John Foxx and other music icons. Sharing the song-creation process with fellow celebrated graphic

designer and Jungian Psychotherapist, Anil Aykan, the album is a beautiful and cerebral exploration of an interesting concept; that of human memory retention within not only the mind, but the body itself. The duo use skin as a metaphor, a living archive holding emotional history and past events. The visual imagery provided within the accompanying Press Kit for the album is mesmerising and beautiful, purposeful and fascinating in equal measure.

The album is a culmination of five years' creative work, recorded in London, mixed and engineered by Steve D'Agostino and Katia Isakoff, and mastered by Cicely Balston at Abbey Road Studios.

The nine compositions are synthetically-charged and stylish, steeped in emotion, angst, and entwined with fronds of compulsion and obsession. There is a special aura to each track, a recurring intensity that captures your attention, and a superb individuality of textures, instrumentation, vocal

expression and delivery.

Each track has a distinct visual identity and uniquely tailored typeface, which alludes to the time and love poured into each song. Every composition fits precisely into the overall landscape of a thoughtfully created and executed album. It would be hard to isolate individual tracks for praise, as the compositions all work so well as a collective tapestry, although each one is quite different to the next. Every sound, noise, texture, word of narrative, has its own space and its own purpose within the greater picture. Sure, the production sounds great enough emanating from your hi-fi speakers turned up as loud as you can dare, but experience the creation within the intimacy of quality headphones and closed eyelids and you will be astonished by the production qualities, the gorgeous vocal and lush electronics leaving you with actual goosebumps... Seems quite fitting really. I'd say that's 'job done'. ●

Kurt Sinclair-Hall

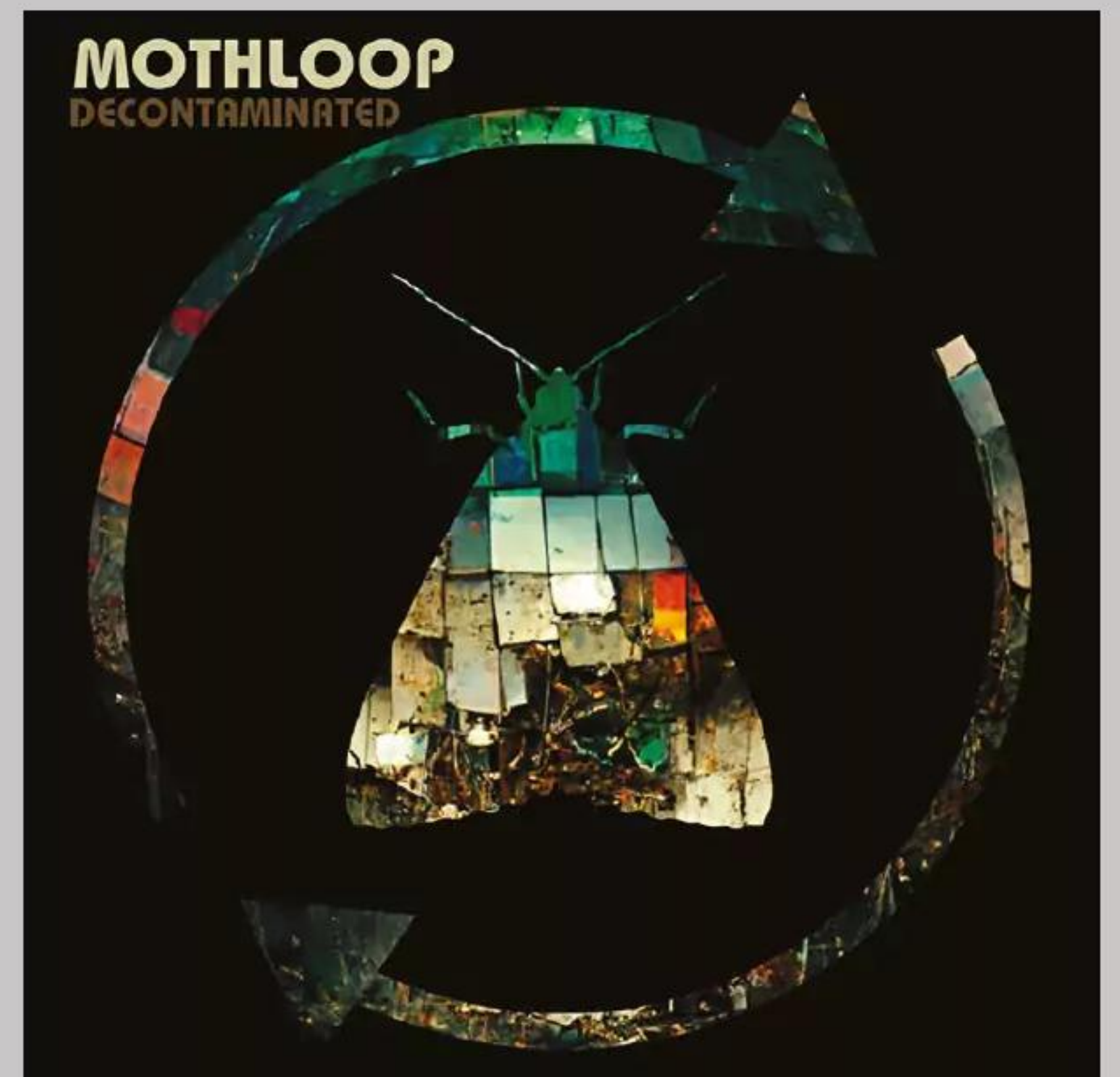
MOTHLOOP DECONTAMINATED

State of Bass

A remodelled version of Mothloop's acclaimed 'Contaminated Disco' album, which explored the "fractured and multifarious voices of ADHD", with a bunch of electronic mavericks revisiting the original compositions and turning them on their head.

Overall, this is a gloriously interesting remix album laced with fun and a dose of mischief. Highlights for me include, and what a way to start an album, 'Information Dislocation (Mothloop vs Sons of Ken)', full-on, hi-energy disco-funk meets Heaven 17 armed with a cowbell, multiple nods to the 70s and 80s, and crammed with personality. Leading into the slightly more subdued 'Electricity (Fused Remix)', which bobbles along nicely with tight percussion and brass accents, inducing involuntary toe tapping with an infectious sing-along chorus. 'Quiet Discipline (Pulses remix)' tells us 'Happiness is a state of mind', as it's angular, hypnotic rhythm pulses along, luring you in with a sensual and soulful brass section that

conjures up memories of by-gone Soft Cell b-sides. 'Quantum Creep (MC Remix)' is an urban slap-bass oasis. Think Art of Noise on Acid having a fist fight with The Black Eyed Peas... an underground anthem of dirty tricks, chants from the hood and very clever mixing. 'Together Apart (Topsy Eyes Remix)' gets the dark and sultry Eastern-promise treatment by synthpop guru Matt Smith with whispered vocals and some mesmerising synthetic textures. 'We Fight Together (Gemma Cullingford Blah Blah Blah Remix)' is an upbeat electroclash banger that sees a throbbing bassline carried by a complex percussion track enhanced by some lovely and quirky male/female vocal delivery and production. '21st Century Requiem (CWNN)' brings a comfortably relaxed ambience, amidst optimistic bright piano that heralds the smooth signature vocal of Erik Stein. Chilled and beautiful. Decontaminated by Mothloop is a wonderfully produced compendium of very diverse and distinct remixes, conceived in the enquiring minds of very creative individuals. Each lovingly



reimagined version shows respect for the original song, but has embellished and elevated the composition, infusing the music with fresh DNA and moving it beyond the landscape of the original artist. A well-produced and uplifting album with a sense of fun, and also a lesson in successful remixing.. ●

www.stateofbassuk.com

Kurt Sinclair-Hall

BLUTENGEL DÄMONEN:STURM

Out Of Line Music

Blutengel, for the uninitiated, are the undisputed German Gods of Goth. Led by the charismatic Chris Pohl, his look of Christopher Lee adds to Blutengel's vampiric overtures, literally translating as 'Blood Angel'. A mainstay of the German dark scene for 27 years, 2025 sees them release an epic double album called 'Dämonen:Sturm' on the Berlin label Out Of Line Music. With a hefty twenty-five songs, split between English and native German lyrics, Pohl, alongside beautifully siren-voiced Ulrike Goldmann, delivers a confident and coherent 17th studio album reinforcing an already defining legacy. Mixing darkwave electronics, gothic rock and Industrial future-pop elements with a lavish coating of Hammer theatrics, the new album delivers a 'business as usual' approach, their trademark sound receiving an 'Es ist der

Hammer' response from the hardcore fans.

To English ears, the dramatic boldness of the songs hits you first. As a 'Eurovision' aficionado and regular visitor to Germany, I don't find the language barrier a stumbling block in my enjoyment of the album. The lyrics on songs such as 'My Creation', a powerful commentary on man's destructive nature, highlight Chris Pohl's bilingual ability. With a couple of singles already released, including a duet with fellow successful German dark synth act Solar Fake, 'Nothing Left' is a further standout track. Playing to our anxieties, a recurrent theme for Blutengel, 'Angst' asks, 'Will they drop the bomb today?' and reflects our feverish worries over nuclear war. Whilst 'Tausend Leben' a soon-to-be 'live favourite' has all the trademark qualities that make Blutengel what they are, Goldmann's



soaring female vocal harmonies pitted against Pohl's deep dulcet growls over a signature lead piano synth-line, combined with 80s soft rock guitars bring a gothic flavour to the proceedings... all adding to the recipe that makes Blutengel great. Will we Brits ever get to taste the live 'black' magic that our Deutsche friends have long enjoyed in concert? Time will tell, but as an introduction to their dark delights, this album more than delivers. ●

Marc Massive

EXIT NORTH HARM / TERMS

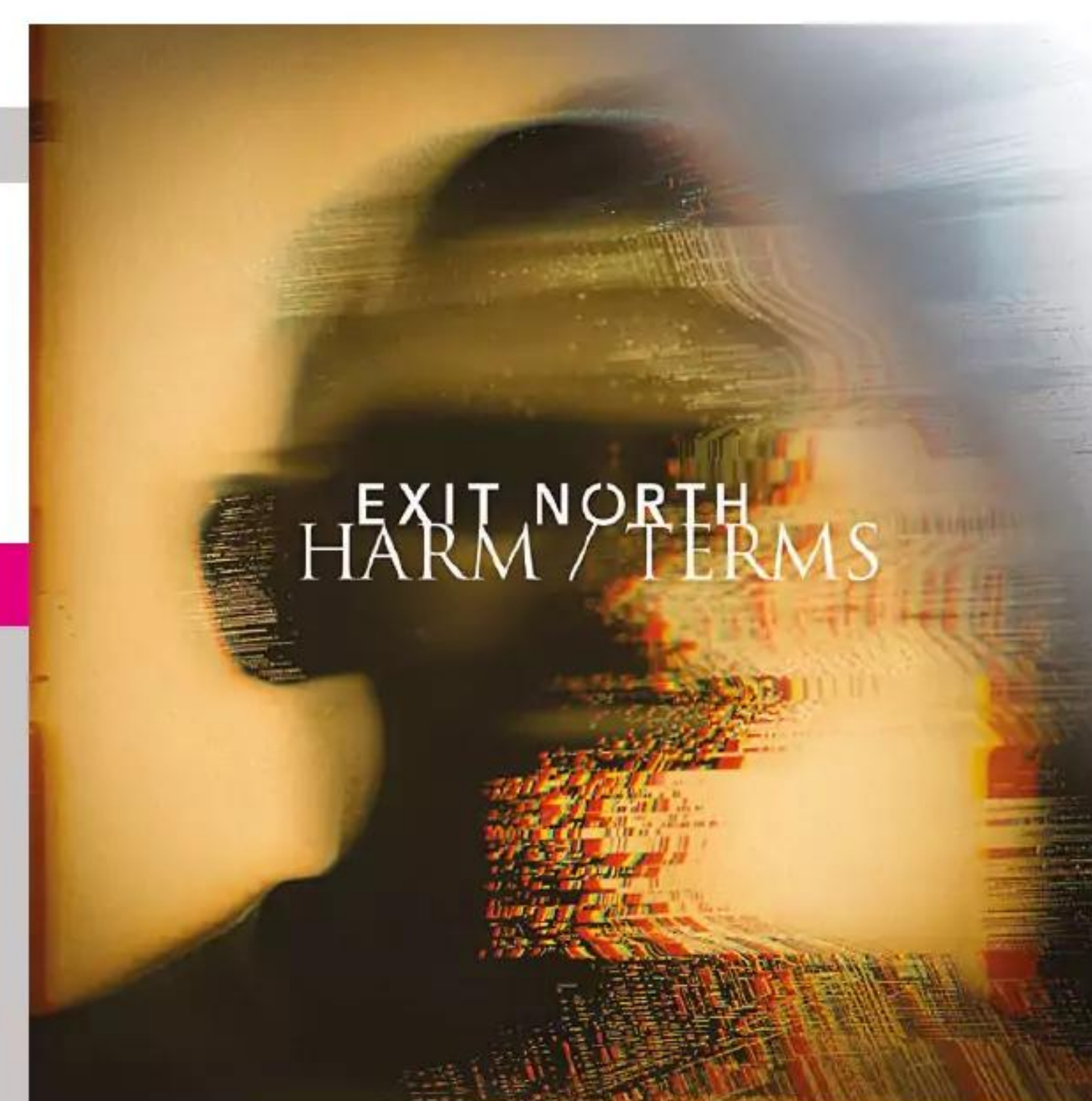
Exit North is a collaboration between composers Thomas Feiner and Steve Jansen who met through the final album by Feiner's band Everywhen and his subsequent guest vocals on Jansen's debut solo album Slope. Both were issued through Samadhi Sound aka David Sylvian's label. And yes, we all know Sylvian is Jansen's brother and together they made up two fifths of Japan. But the similarities end there.

Along with the rest of Exit North - Ulf Jansson and Charlie Storm - Feiner and Jansen have produced a catalogue that offers experimentalism bound up in the easily defined contours of standardised art rock. Not that this is a bad thing. In fact, Exit North's comfortable predictability is one of their great strengths.

On 'Harm / Terms' we are once again

invited to submerge ourselves in music that wouldn't sound out of place on a Scandi-noire. Music for an artfully captured scene of an aesthetically arranged cadaver framed by deep snow, deeper forest and desolate isolation. 'Harm' is a tense affair that never sits still, moving from motif to motif, mood to mood in a series of subtle steps. Here Jansen's trademark stuttering and rolling rhythms create a bed for a gritty, distorted vocal performance that shifts between determination and despair in a stop/start battle between man, nature and the Gods before erupting into a semi chorus of yearning souls and broken bodies.

The epic 'Terms' finds the duo locked in the desolation and loss of the post-battle emptiness of an emotional break up. A slowly growing epic of shifting sounds and subtle shapes that builds through layers of



dust to a heartfelt cry before dismantling in a series of spectral departures. Spirits dying layer by layer and being blown to the wind.

The three track EP's final song 'A-Shaped Trees' in which a tender, but haunting piano echoes across an icy silence, Feiner delivers a wind-swept and frost-bitten baritone that Scott Walker would have been proud of.

'Harm / Terms' forges little new in their musical armoury but when the old and established is so beautifully formed, who really needs new? ●

Martin James

PRECOC OTHER SIDE

ANALOGUE TRASH

Nashville-based PreCog have been creating entertaining yet cerebral synthpop music, with a leaning to the darker side, for the last ten years. Eight of those under the promotional wing of Todmorden's independent label Analogue Trash. This latest 13-track offering, Other Side, was recorded over a three-year period and has a recurring theme of 'faith in ourselves and others' running through the album. Highlights include opening track 'Take Me Anywhere' which immediately sets out the PreCog stall. If any song sums up the band, for me, it's this one... stylish musicianship, gloriously smooth melody and sleek production, providing the perfect canvas for signature heartfelt vocals courtesy of Jason Thomas. 'Never Try' continues the lush sound, with an understated confidence and assured musicianship. The palette of sounds and textures used within this album are the perfect balance for Jason's voice, a perfect example being 'Lost My Faith in You', an

effortless driving piece. 'Play Pretend' enters a darker realm and Jason's precision-layered vocal carries this disturbingly alluring track wonderfully, one that I didn't want to end. 'Drown Me' bounces along, joyfully uplifting, and gives utter false hope as I hear "Take me down to the water's edge, I don't want you to drown me slowly" (!) That was a surprise. But actually, as you listen to the album unfold, it's full of revelations, either lyrically or musically. 'Paper Wings' presents the more abstract side of PreCog, a beautifully clever dichotomy of harmony and discord. 'Only for a Moment' follows, juxtaposed in all its lavish orchestral magnificence, military percussion and reflective vocal. The fascinating and fantastic playlist continues... 'Perfect Disaster' is a quietly confident, retrospective composition with some lovely guitar licks and that quality percussive thread that weaves its way through all PreCog songs. I actually felt a little sad as I realised this was the final track. Daft really, I mean, I can listen again! The aptly titled



'Final Moments' exposes the charmingly vulnerable side of Jason's voice, balanced beautifully with gorgeous strings and gentle piano. I am absorbed in the power and strength of the lyrics; every word has a purpose and is emphasised precisely and effectually. A booming percussive crescendo at 3:57 shakes your soul and lifts the song, triumphantly carrying you along on a wave of emotion, before gently delivering you at the conclusion of this breathtaking opus. That was a voyage, I'm worn out emotionally!

You must buy this album, believe me, you must... ●

**www.analoguetrash.com/release/precog-other-side
Kurt Sinclair-Hall**

UK TOUR 2025

11.09 - THE ALBERT, BRIGHTON
(+ BLACK LIGHT ASCENSION + DISTANT FIGURES)

12.09 - CORPORATION, SHEFFIELD
(+ BLACK LIGHT ASCENSION + GOTEKI)

13.09 - CART & HORSES, LONDON
(+ AGENCY V + VAGERR)

14.09 - CHINNERYS, SOUTHEND
(+ DAS FLUFF + IN A HOUSE OF HEARTBEATS)

18.09 - TRILLIANS, NEWCASTLE
(+ BLACK LIGHT ASCENSION + STOCK IMAGE)

19.09 - BILLY BOOTLEGGERS, NOTTINGHAM
(+ GOTEKI + BLACK LIGHT ASCENSION)

20.09 - GOTHBOX @ THE CASTLE, LUTON

I N E R T I A

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E S T R A N G E D I C O N

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INERTIA ESTRANGED ICON

DISTORTION PRODUCTIONS



Inertia's latest album inexplicably slipped under our radar on its release, so apologies to Reza. But we waded bravely through the backlog and managed to uncover an absolute gem of a production, courtesy of Reza Udhin, Andrew Lowlife, Alexys B, Nick Bayford, and special guests, whose talents and creativity combined to create *Estranged Icon*.

So finally... it's playing down the headphones, and what an introduction! The beautiful violins of Matt Howden herald the entrance of the first track 'New Format'. The thoughtful silky tones of Reza's voice carry this relaxed and sophisticated tune, accompanied by a hypnotic Eastern rhythm bed. Not what I was expecting to be honest, but a wonderful way to ease into the album. Instantly track 2, 'Scowl' sets a new pace with the jagged signature guitars of KMFD and PIG's Steve White, lively, animated bass, and a driving vibe to another surprising track. 'Siren Call' next, and a more familiar feel of synth bass, pads and electronica. Reza's voice rises softly through the synthesised waves and comforts your ears until the arrival of the Depeche Mode-esque chorus. This is subtle and charming too. Track 4 is 'Heartbeat', with a heartfelt vocal from Reza hailing a complicated barrage of electronic textures and sequences that give way to a mid-tempo anthem of some note. I can imagine this one performed live and heads shaking in the mosh pit for sure. 'Spectrum' is up next, with some luscious, contemplative



strings, plucky sequences and the kind of rich chord sequences that are appreciated best with your eyes closed. In fact, I was just expecting the vocals to come in and it ended! So, onto track 6, 'Conflicted', with a well funk'd up, angular sequence accompanied by Reza's breathy vocal delivery backed up by some simple vocal harmonies, with percussive sections that add to the urgency of a fine track. 'Witching Hour' uses a beautifully exotic palette of sounds together with another whispered vocal delivery from the enigmatic frontman. Simplistic guitar accents compliment the military percussion and add a sense of expectancy. 'No Reserve' is a confident, almost cocky electronic wonder of a track... rhythmic, understated and yet with a touch of arrogance. As with all the songs on this work, the technical production and instrument placement within the aural spectrum are precise and also very clever. The penultimate track is 'The Fall', a gradual instrumental builder with, once again, assured and precise guitar work, confident sequencer layers and a clear-as-they-come drum track that holds your hand and carries you along. The final song is 'Romantic' and I'm transported back

to the mid 1980's by a wall of synthesizer textures, splodgy bass and elevated strings, reinforced by a passionate, haunting vocal by Reza. A beautiful number to end a very impressive album indeed. Thoroughly enjoyable and somewhat grown-up synthpop with lots of added depth and emotion, and the odd curve ball chucked in to keep you on your toes.

Can't wait to catch Inertia performing this album live later this September. ●

Kurt Sinclair-Hall



SLAVE TO THE ALGORHYTHM

By Martin James

Unless you've been incarcerated in the darkest catacombs of Planet Earth's most remote dungeons, you won't have escaped the increased anger aimed at music's streaming - or should that be stealing - platforms. With particular ire aimed at Spotify for their unscrupulous practices of ripping off creatives. Grass roots artists have claimed that the streaming giant is waging a war against them. Artists at all levels of success have demanded change. And all the while CEO Danel Ek and his \$7.7 billion are smirking all the way to the bank.

The most recent Loud & Clear Report from Spotify supports the claim that grass roots artists get the smallest pay out. No shit Sherlock. The report shows that in 2024 a very select group of 210 artists whose earnings from recording and publishing topped \$5million took approximately 21% of the platform's total payout, which is up from 2023's 19%. That's a win right? Well, in real terms that means 0.08% of paid artists received over one-fifth of Spotify's total \$10billion payout while the 252,000 artists who earned less than £50k payout received only 14% of the total. A figure that's 15% down on 2023.

In only eight years the number of artists earning over \$5million from Spotify has grown significantly from 50 to 210. In business terms this represents a huge success. Conversely the number of artists earning between \$1k and \$50k has tripled from 74,000 to 252,000. But their average payout has remained static.

Of course, for many of Blitzed

Magazine's grass roots music-making readers these headline figures are meaningless. Mainly because we're the ones who have been hit by the zero payout to any songs gaining less than 1000 plays per annum as well as the worrying trend of songs that achieve sudden streaming success being taken down through the increasingly erroneous claim that we've 'knowingly or unknowingly' employed bot playlists. And, to add insult to that injury, the proliferation of Spotify produced AI music eagerly taking the place of our banished tracks.

The latter isn't new. In a move reminiscent of the early 20th century when a small but vibrant hub of songwriters in a small section of West 28th Street in New York City toiled away on minimum wage producing songs for the hitmakers, Spotify has long employed songwriters to record 'library' tracks. But describing Spotify as a virtual Tin Pan Alley would be a tad romantic. They were effectively producing content that they could earn on by rigging the system from the inside.

Naturally Spotify have denied these practices, but music industry researchers have documented numerous instances of the same track appearing under different titles and artist names across a multitude of official playlists. Unofficial audience generated playlists that have brought together all of these 'songs' have been rapidly taken down.

The emergence of Spotify's AI Tin Pan Alley was noted in 2023 when large numbers of the same ambient track

started to show up under different names on various chill out playlists. Listener adamfaze documented this in his 'these are all the same song' playlist which was taken down as quickly as it was published.

Suggestions these 'songs' were a prank by one musician with a grudge against Spotify don't hold much water when we consider how difficult it is to upload the same song multiple times. The algorithm is quick to spot the duplication. So large numbers of the same track with different names can only be endorsed by the host platform. Perhaps, back in 2023 they were testing the system to see how to fully maximise the AI revolution?

But what has this got to do with the 87% of tracks currently on the platform that are currently not monetising? Or the 34.6 million tracks that had between 101 and 999 streams, the 47.7 million tracks had between 11 and 100 streams and the 93.2 million tracks had 0 to 10 streams? Yep, you read that right, in 2024 175.2 MILLION songs were non-monetising.

Combine these figures with the headlines from Spotify's Loud & Clear Report it is clear that these sums are just going to continue to grow. Is it any wonder grass roots artists are so unhappy. But wait a minute... let's just stand back a moment to think about this.

In a time before David Bowie had predicted that music would become like water, artists without a label could only get their music out there by duping up a few cassettes or CDs in the hope that they'd sell a few at a gig so they could

at least buy a couple of beers. Hands up those of us with boxes of unsold product still sitting somewhere in the loft!

It was no different when you were signed to a label though. For every mega selling artist there were hundreds who barely sold anything, despite financial backing. In reality the list of the mildly successful, the one hit wonders and the never-rans significantly outnumber the successful few. And what the frightening numbers of unsuccessful or minor success artists had in common was that their masters had to be kept in a vault, their stock had to be held in a warehouse and on the comparatively rare occasion that their product was ordered it had to be shipped. All of these things came at huge expense. The kind of expense that could never be recouped.

And before we all shout 'the whole game is rigged', well it always has been. In fact, for reasons that are almost unfathomable, human beings have an unparalleled ability to keep embracing things that are harmful to them.

Like turkeys voting for Christmas, we quite literally continue to stream via Spotify in our masses. It's the 'masses' that is actually the problem. Spotify's algorithm is built around a lowest common denominator model. In other words, it reaches for the 'most popular'

at all times. So when I listen to David Bowie the algorithm assumes I like Queen because, hey, when web scraping the masses AI discovered most Bowie fans also love Queen. I hate Queen.

The fact that Spotify's algorithm works via a mass audience is the real issue. Let's be honest, most people use music as aural wallpaper. They don't love it. Music doesn't sit at the core of their being. It's just a temporary, glancing entertainment.

The Spotify interface is created for the mass consumer not the elitist music fan. It's a process that is driven by the corporatisation of user-centred approaches. The interface design implies that the platform responds to user demands but in fact runs a 'corporation-centred' interface. Cultural commentator Kyle Chayka wrote in the New Yorker in 2024 that he'd quit Spotify due to the way it 'determines not just how we consume culture but what we consume as well'. He further explores the 'enshittification of Spotify' arguing that 'listeners are being conditioned to rely on what Spotify feeds them rather than on what they seek out for themselves.'

Doug Ford, head of editorial and music culture at Spotify between 2013 and 2018 takes this further. Pointing to the algorithmic playlists that reorder tracklists, automatically play on shuffle,

and add in new, similar songs (Bowie to Queen!!!) he argues that listeners become alienated from their own tastes. "You're giving them everything they think they love and it's all homogenised."

That process affects us as listeners and our relationship with music. But it also impacts on audiences of grass roots music which is victim to the very same homogenising effect. We might want to explore new 80s inspired music, but what gets prioritised is the most obvious, least challenging, most nostalgic. So, it's the most bland and obvious music that infiltrates algorithmically generated playlists of the music we want to hear. Anything challenging never makes it to the party. Leaving even our favourite spaces a playground for the mass idea of what we like. And let's face it, if we're not hearing the stuff that doesn't fit we'll never know if we like it.

Bottom line, we might hate the hierarchical tiering of Spotify payouts but it's the homogenising effect of the corporatised interface that's doing the most damage to grass roots music. Because even in these rarefied circles it's the least challenging homogenised songs that win. And in this environment the future looks like an endless audio meal of the same old thing and the new same old thing. ●



Public Playlist

these are all the same song

adamfaze • 1,706 likes • 49 songs, 42 min 21 sec






#	Title	Album	Date added
1	 Marquis Stark Aiste	Marquis Stark	2 days ago
2	 Sandpon Bog Devil	Sandpon Bog	2 days ago
3	 Lynn Thomas Grakk	Lynn Thomas	2 days ago
4	 Fosticrians Arachtasians	Fosticrians	2 days ago
5	 Eesin Istemeh Gordard	Eesin	2 days ago
6	 Viper Beelzebub Brett Breeden	Viper Beelzebub	2 days ago
7	 Fulfun Wegme	Fulfun	2 days ago
8	 Gals Dalvadill Fethierd	Gals	2 days ago

PLEASANTLY DISTURBED BY LEE STUART EVANS

Scratching Shed Publishing Ltd

Pleasantly Disturbed is an unputdownable novel by hugely talented author Lee Stuart Evans. A full-time comedy writer since 2002, Evans has written for the likes of Harry Hill, Frank Skinner, Jonathan Ross, David Baddiel, Jack Dee and many more comedy geniuses.

Taking its name from the Simple Minds song of the same name, Pleasantly Disturbed is set in the 1980s in the Midlands (England) where the tale starts with our hero Robin in his school careers appointment at age 16, telling the careers advisor that his life's ambition is to be Jim Kerr, "singer in the best band in the world, Simple Minds". Robin's girlfriend Fliss is a musical genius, the "East Midlands answer to Kate Bush" but without the confidence or desire for any publicity. Whilst waiting for his inevitable (to him) career as a musical megastar, the young Robin takes a job at a local car garage – after reminding himself that Jim Kerr also had to "lower

himself to the level of a mere mortal with a day job in order to achieve his true destiny". Along with mechanic Vern, Robin becomes entangled in an amateur sleuthing investigation worthy of 'George Cinnamon' as they investigate missing cars and mysterious happenings in a derelict railway yard near Sherwood forest.

This book goes from smirk-at-the-corner-of-your-mouth to laugh-out-loud funny. Evans' turn of phrase is incredibly clever yet subtle at the same time, and the descriptions, words and mannerisms of the characters are so rich and vivid, you feel like you know them. And yes, I found myself reading the character's parts in what I imagine their accents would be. Thankfully in my head though.

The recurring theme throughout the whole book is Robin's desire to be Jim Kerr, his obsession and adoration for the man and his music striking chords (no pun intended) with the musicophile in me. The stories of Robin re-enacting

his idols' performances in his bedroom, dressed in his sisters tights (Robin, not Jim), or dancing in the streets to a soundtrack only he could hear with his chocolate bar microphone, oblivious to the world around him, are endearing and heartwarming. How many of us were (and maybe still are) bedroom popstars ourselves?

A beautifully written feel-good coming-of-age story, bursting with geographical authenticity and detailed subject knowledge (Evans worked in garages himself for several years in north Nottinghamshire) with the rosy glow of nostalgia delivered via well-presented characters and storylines. Enough to make you want to get back in a Ford Escort XR3i and put a Simple Minds cassette tape in the car stereo and drive around in 1986 for a while. Truly, a 'Glittering Prize' for your bookshelf. ●

Bridget Gray

'ALIVE & KICKING WITH BIG LAUGHS AND AN EVEN BIGGER HEART'

PATRICK KIELTY

'A love story to rival
Gregory's Girl...
I absolutely loved it'
Cathi Unsworth

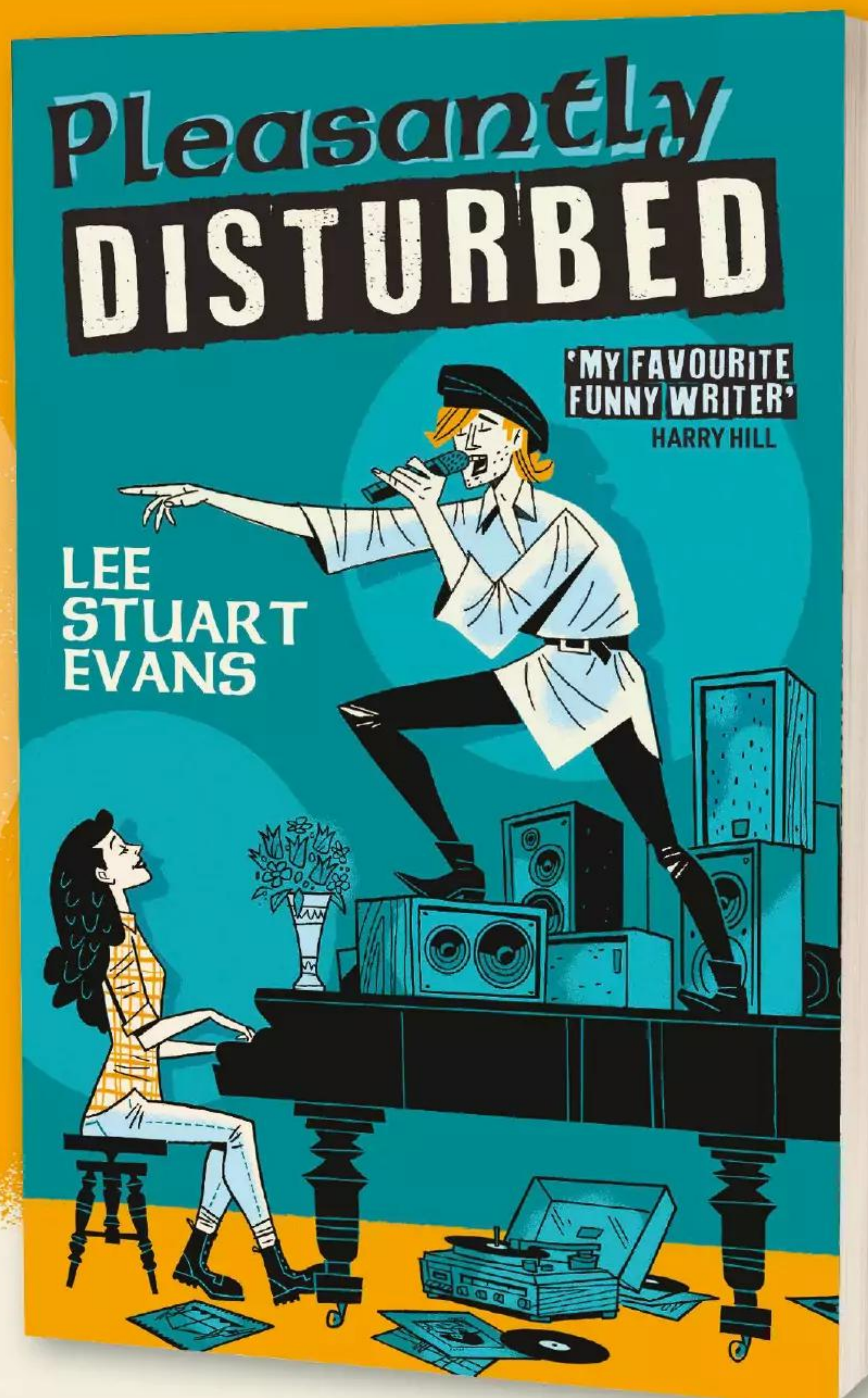
'I laughed like a drain...
Magnificent'
Pete Paphides

'A tonic of a novel...
very funny, but it aches
in all the right places, too'
Graeme Thomson

'★★★★★'
Andy Miller

'Hilarious... I smiled
all the way through'
Simon Rimmer

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Harry Hill

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Alistair Braidwood



Scratching Shed
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LOOK SHARP! - JOE JACKSON (1979)

by Imogen Bebb

Joe Jackson - born David Jackson in Staffordshire in 1954 - released his debut album *Look Sharp!* in January 1979, having spent the previous ten years playing piano in bars and clubs, before being signed to A&M Records in 1978. His taut but melodic new wave sound earned him numerous comparisons to one of his contemporaries, Elvis Costello (despite their disparate vocal styles and varied musical influences), but also plenty of positive attention from the music press, who immediately took to Jackson's sophisticated piano playing and melodic songwriting. "Power pop at its refreshing best" wrote New York Times critic John Rockwell of the album. "Perhaps Elvis Costello, Graham Parker and the Clash are more earnest, or even important. But Joe Jackson and the Police are more fun".

Interestingly, however, whilst critics seemed to be a fan of the music on *Look Sharp!*, they seemed less enamoured with the album artwork. "The album's title and cover (a photograph of Jackson's feet encased in a pair of white side-lace Denson winkle pickers that are, unfortunately, not nearly as cool as he evidently thinks they are) suggest an obsession with style" wrote music journalist Charles Shaar Murray in the *New Musical Express*. He continued to dismiss Jackson's aesthetic throughout the review. He ended the piece by saying Jackson's "polkadot kipper tie is gonna have to go" whilst complimenting the album's musical content ("He's a sharp [...] lyricist and a very, very fine singer - simultaneously crisp, matter-of-fact and highly expressive").

But little did Murray know that he could not have been more wrong when he depicted Jackson as an artist who obsessed over his own style as well as that of his album artwork. In fact, the design of this particular cover was given very little thought

whatsoever, as Brian Griffin (the man who was responsible for the cover photograph) has testified. "I hired a pale blue Ford Escort to pick up Joe" he told news magazine *The Week* in 2017. "I remember we parked at Waterloo and went to munch on hamburgers at the Wimpy Bar at Waterloo Station. It's just a short walk to the South Bank from there, so we headed off in that direction. When we got there, I saw in an instant a shaft of sunlight shining between the concrete. I told Joe to quickly 'stand there'. A click with my Olympus OM1 and that was that, it was all over in five minutes.

Joe had on those now famous winkle picker shoes from Shelly's Shoes on Carnaby Street and that was the shot".

"This is truly the easiest and most famous album cover I have ever shot", he later added (this coming from the man who took photos of numerous iconic 80s musicians, including Echo and the Bunnymen, Depeche Mode and, interestingly, Elvis Costello). "Once the album was released and it was such a hit, I remember I had these girls come up to me one day in New York and kiss me. They felt it was the greatest album cover ever".

Jackson himself, meanwhile, hated the cover: "[He] hated the fact his face wasn't on the sleeve and vowed never to work with me again - and

he never did!" Griffin recalled. "I think he was so upset that his first album cover was his shoes". Given the iconic status that the cover has since developed, it would be interesting to find out whether Jackson still maintains this opinion - although having read his recent retrospective thoughts on the album itself (a modest overview which ended "for a first album, this one's not bad, but I was only 23 when I made it and it would be pretty weird if I didn't think I'd done better things since") then it may well be that he stands by his original decision. ●



By Bridget Gray

THE DEVOUT — EUROPEAN VIOLATION TOUR 2025

THE STATION, CANNOCK



Credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Hailed as the UK's best loved Depeche Mode tribute act, The Devout pull out all the stops to provide a truly authentic show. "Fans entertaining fans" they may be, but the trio of Barclay Quarton, Keith Trigwell and Reza Udhin are also acclaimed musicians in their own rights and have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the music, visuals and production techniques of Depeche Mode which they faithfully recreate, whilst at the same time adding elements of their own style.

The setlist is immense, 30 Depeche Mode tracks spanning the early Speak and Spell era songs through to Violator as the band pay homage to the 35th anniversary of that seminal release. The Devout delivered a satisfying variation of album tracks, hits, B-sides and 'live versions' from across the Depeche Mode of 1981 through to 1993 (yes they did sneak in a song from Songs of Faith and Devotion) and the audience reaction to every song proved that they had not only picked a gratifying selection of tracks to perform – and did them justice.

It's clear that The Devout truly know their 'Mode. Keith's technical input of programming and his assured performance on synths, alongside Reza's versatility in switching from keyboards to guitar to lead vocals, underpins the aural integrity of their sound. Barclay as Dave Gahan has the vocals, dress sense, swagger, audience engagement and even the breathing techniques so faithfully recreated it's almost eerie. Making the 'World In My Eyes' Biggles eyes over his head, and frequent cries

of "I can't hear you Cannock!" while thrusting a boom mic over the first few rows of the crowd, very Gahan indeed. In contrast, and true to form, Reza delivered the Martin Gore lead tracks with an understated vulnerability that those songs demand, but with a charming confidence. He would have had the crowd on the edge of their seat – if anyone had been sitting down by that point.

This set has something for everyone; where the song is a smash hit it's perhaps a remix version, or an extended 12" mix or a live tour mix such as 'New Life', 'Personal Jesus' and 'Never Let Me Down Again' or there's an album track or a B-side – 'Ice Machine', 'But Not Tonight', 'Blue Dress', 'Halo' and 'Clean' which are not often heard live so these in particular were a joy.

This is a fantastic show for Depeche Mode fans that love the early material and want to continue to see it performed live, without having to re-mortgage their homes or sell their kidneys. An experience fit for Devotees and casual fans alike. "There's no doubt, I'm one of the devout". ●



By Mike Palin

ERASURED

THE O2 INSTITUTE2, BIRMINGHAM



credit Ken Harrison Photography

The eagerly anticipated Erasured gig – supported by The Rude Awakening had finally arrived at the O2 Institute. The Rude Awakening (TRA) – Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray – took to the stage in front of a virtually full house. It was noticeable that the audience responded from the off – there was none of the usual chatter going on and background noise whilst the support was playing. TRA gave the crowd a trip back to the 80s. Tracks including ‘Pop Muzik’, ‘Fade To Grey’, ‘Are ‘Friends’ Electric?’ and ‘Tesla Girls’ all had the crowd joining in. In fact, the only time they couldn’t sing along was when ‘Plastic Friend’ – The Rude Awakening’s new self-penned single was played. Yes! TRA are song writers in their own right and they tailor their gigs for their audience – sometimes you will get an all 80s covers gig, other times a mixture including their own material. It was non-stop dancing during the TRA set. I’ve seen TRA quite a few times, and I will definitely be seeing them again. And again. And again. With the crowd well and truly warmed up – it was time for Erasured.

Erasured, The Ultimate Erasure Tribute, have racked up rave reviews in the past, so I was expecting a lot! Mark Rodway as Andy Bell came out decked in big wings as he belted out well known tracks including ‘Chorus’, ‘Victim of Love’, ‘Oh L’Amour’

and ‘Ship of Fools’. He even made time for multiple costume changes including a pink feather boa, bright yellow coat, the famous ABBA-esque jacket and ending with gold hotpants. Credit must go to the two female dancers Enya Russell and Lucy Hurst who were a visual treat and who kept the tempo going whilst Mark was backstage changing. The ‘Vince’ of the duo, ‘Rob Lindup’ did an amazing job with the instrumentation which was fantastically authentic to particular live or remix versions of the songs. The guys gave us a full repertoire of hits and album tracks including ‘Sometimes’, ‘Blue Savannah’ and ‘Love to Hate You’. The energy from the stage certainly found its way to a really appreciative audience. It was obvious that some are repeat gig goers by the banter with Mark and the crowd. From the ABBA medley to ‘Chains of Love’, and an encore of ‘Stop’ and ‘A Little Respect’ – they gave it their all. The audience left happy and content – they had come for a show - and that is exactly what they got. Smashed it out of the park. ●





credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

MARK REEDER MASTERMINDED FOR SUCCESS — PART TWO

By Kurt Sinclair-Hall and Bridget Gray

Mark Reeder, a disillusioned young man from Manchester, travelled to Berlin in 1978 to buy some records. He never returned! Mark soon became instrumental in developing the electronic music scene in Berlin, introducing Joy Division, The Passage, A Certain Ratio and many other UK bands. Blitzed Magazine editors Kurt and Bridget flew to Berlin to meet Mark on a beautiful but cold day and chatted over a coffee and an enormous stack of vinyl and CDs, about why he was compelled to stay in this intriguing city. This is part two of a serialised conversation with Mark about his impressive music adventure so far.

Mark started shipping back weird and wonderful records from Berlin that weren't available in Manchester, or indeed the UK. Bernard Sumner was really the only person who he could actually talk to about the music who was genuinely interested

and appreciative. Mark would send the records over, he wouldn't physically travel to the UK. He told us, "It was a long way. It wasn't like today where you can get on a plane and be touching down in Manchester in an hour and a half. It cost a little under £600 back then to fly to the UK from Berlin, and the train wasn't much cheaper. So I just stayed here and explored the East, because the East was cheap. It was a fraction of the cost to travel in the West, but it was far more interesting, nobody knew anything about it. I was curious, I wanted to meet East Germans and find out what life was really like for them, but everyone I knew said "what would you want to go there for?" ... and I said "but it's really interesting, you can see incredible things. Have you not experienced it? Don't just go and visit your Auntie - go there and immerse yourself, have a night out."

We wondered how did the East Germans take to Mark, this inquisitive Northerner with a fascination for their music and culture? But they were equally fascinated by Mark too, probably because they didn't get the chance to meet someone from England, especially someone who actually knew about the music that they revered and adored. Mark explained, "They just couldn't buy that music. The record shops there didn't sell punk rock, didn't sell anything that the locals wanted, put it that way. I helped them get what they wanted. I started to generate friendships in East Berlin. I would record a few of my favourite tracks onto cassettes and smuggle them into East Berlin, you know, and just give them as gifts. At the time I wasn't really aware of the significance of my actions, actually breaking the rules, because you were forbidden to take anything like a cassette into East Germany.

credit: Peter Gruchot



Well, this is what I was going to do, and the rules are there to be broken. But they started to suss me out, because normally as a tourist you go over for the day, go around East Berlin, come back and never come back again. But I wasn't like that, I went there every day for two weeks. The authorities started to become suspicious, "What's he doing? What's he looking for? What's his agenda?" ... and that's when I began to come under the observation of the Stasi. I was looking for the punk rock underground scene, thinking there must be something happening in East Berlin. I was going to see bands like Transit and I thought this can't be all there is, there must be something else. But you didn't see punks on the street. Punk was forbidden in the DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) so if you were a punk and you looked a bit punky the cops would just take you off the street. The authorities thought that punk rock had been born out of unemployment, and in East Germany, there was no unemployment. So they just removed them from society."

"I remember late 81 or 82 I saw this guy who was kind of like drainpipe trousers, black spiky hair, and I thought, I bet he knows what's going on. I waited for him to get off the train and I ran after him and collared him, and I said "where's the underground scene?" "And he said, "there isn't one, it's all forbidden." At this point I didn't have any friends, I'd met a few people, but they weren't really my mates, so I gave him my name and address and said, "if you hear of anything let me know", but I never did hear from him. He didn't know who I was and what kind of person I am. And you know, I could have

been a Brit, but I could have been a Stasi pretending to be a Brit. I was wearing a shirt and tie, because to get into East Germany you couldn't look like a punk, you couldn't have spiky hair, or they wouldn't let you in, you had to look as conservative as possible."

"A couple of months after that I got a letter from this girl saying, 'can you please phone me?', because you couldn't phone from East Berlin to West Berlin, but I could phone from West to East. I called her and had a chat, and we agreed to meet at what was the seat of the East German government in East Berlin Palast der Republik (The Palace of the Republic) near the cathedral. It was like a glazed shoebox but upstairs they had a cocktail bar, and we arranged to meet there. It was full of guys in suits, and this girl sitting at the bar in an Unknown Pleasures t-shirt and I thought she must be it, my honey trap! Let's find out..."

But this intriguing and mysterious liaison turned out to be very rewarding. She knew about Joy Division, and she listened to John Peel all the time on British Network Forces Radio. She introduced Mark to the emerging underground punk rock scene in East Berlin. And for her and her brother, Mark made tapes of his personal record collection and smuggled it into East Berlin. The tape would be passed on to their friends, and their friends would give it to somebody else and eventually the whole of East Germany had a copy.

So, was Mark's interest piqued by Berlin alone, or maybe he was inquisitive about surrounding countries and cultures? He continued, enthusiastically, "I was intrigued by East Berlin, but also I thought, what about Czechoslovakia and Hungary? So, I went to these places as well. I met

some dissidents in Prague. I met this guy whose father was a signatory to Charter 77, which was a charter drawn up by Václav Havel, a playwright and author, [and later became the Czech President] it was about freedom of speech. Some friends of his played in this band called The Plastic People of the Universe. But the Czech government at the time had shut them down and they were not allowed to perform. So, he wrote this Charter, and if you signed this you were voicing your opinion against the government's shutdown of The Plastic People of the Universe. Anyone who signed that was immediately banned from whatever art they did, you know, if you were a painter or piano player or anything, you got immediately stopped. This guy's father was one of these signatories, and he was not allowed to play piano at home. If he touched the piano, he would be in jail. So, I got in with this group of people and we did a secret gig just outside of Prague with my band, Die Unbekannten, where everything was forbidden until the State said it wasn't. You were allowed to go to work, to go to restaurants, or to go to some State-run entertainment, but nothing other than that. So I did this secret gig for these dissidents and it was a revelation. They couldn't believe it, that we'd come all the way to do this for them. It was insane. But it gave me such a kick, it was like if I can do it here, maybe I can do it in East Berlin too and see what happens, you know, to give them some kind of inspiration..." ●

Mark Reeder – Masterminded for Success Part Three will be in the next issue of Blitzed Magazine.

AT THE VIDEOTHEQUE

'NEW MOON ON MONDAY' - DURAN DURAN (1984)

By Imogen Bebb



called La Luna who are trying to overthrow a dictatorial regime. “We set out to make a little movie” confessed the video’s director Brian Grant, known for his work on music videos by the likes of Olivia Newton-John and Peter Gabriel. “I’m not sure we succeeded”.

There are many out there who would probably agree with him - not least the band themselves, if guitarist Andy Taylor’s autobiography is anything to go by. “Everybody [...] hates it”, he wrote “particularly the dreadful scene at the end where we all dance together. Even today, I cringe and leave the room if anyone plays [it].” Taylor goes on to reveal that the ending scene was “one of the few times he had seen [keyboardist Nick Rhodes] dance”, and that he was “half cut” by the time it came to filming the band’s scenes, because it had been so cold and dark on the set all day that they all had to keep drinking to stay warm.

Others, however (this writer included) might disagree with Taylor, and say that the video possesses a certain charm that was lacking in the slightly unsettling ‘Union of the Snake’ video. After all, there was nothing new about Duran Duran throwing themselves around foreign countries, and the video’s intriguing (albeit loosely-told) concept seems to match up well with the song’s subtle but razor-sharp verses and those mysterious sounding synths that simmer underneath its euphoric chorus.

Interestingly, the UK chart placing obtained by ‘New Moon on Monday’ (number 9) apparently came as somewhat of a disappointment to the band at the time. We’ll leave it to you to decide whether this slightly lower chart placing had anything to do with its music video... ●



At the beginning of 1984, Duran Duran were the biggest band in the UK - if not the world. The previous three years had seen them drastically alter their musical identity, transforming themselves from moody New Romantics to slick, besuited, ‘new pop’ sensations who jetted about from one exotic country to another. Alongside this transformation, their commercial popularity had grown exponentially, and whilst most of the music press couldn’t stand them, they probably felt somewhat comforted by their hordes of screaming fans, hefty royalty cheques, and the global fame they had amassed for themselves in an eye-wateringly short period of time.

The question on everyone’s lips at this point, then, was what Duran Duran would do next. Having already released two studio albums (their eponymous debut in 1981, and *Rio* the following year), the band’s answer to this question was to quickly start working on a third (the album that would later become 1984’s *Seven* and the *Ragged Tiger*) which they hoped would

perpetuate their run of success whilst also allowing them to experiment a little with their musical style.

The first single from the album was ‘Union of the Snake’, which was released in October 1983. With its cutting guitar riff, apocalyptic music video and generally menacing feel, the Duran Duran sound appeared to have developed a rawer, harder edge, and the record shot into the top 10 in countries as diverse as New Zealand, Norway, France, Canada, also making number 3 in the band’s native UK. The album’s second single, however, ‘New Moon on Monday’, had an altogether different feel, combining atmospheric synth texts with what *AllMusic* journalist Donald Guarisco describes as “effervescent verse melodies that bounce high and low [and] a triumphant-sounding chorus with a rousing feel”.

The song’s music video, too, took a very different tone to that of its predecessor. The storyline is somewhat difficult to make out, although apparently the general premise was that the band were part of a French underground resistance movement

By Jan Blackwell

PETE WYLIE AND THE MIGHTY WAH!

BRUDENELL CLUB LEEDS



Credit Jan Blackwell

Tonight's gig is at The Brudenell Club in Leeds, a small, intimate venue with a petite stage. This is Pete Wylie and The Mighty Wah's Songs of Strength & Heartbreak tour, to celebrate 25 years since the album release, coinciding with a long-awaited album reissue.

The support for tonight are two of Pete's band members Elliot Gaspar and Ross Munro, together known as Limbo Days. Primarily a Jazz/Soul duo, not usually my thing, but Elliot has a really good voice and he's a great keyboard player, and joined by Ross on saxophone, it was a surprisingly good if not mellow start to the evening.

So, to the main act. Now I didn't know what to expect, not having seen Pete Wylie live before, but I certainly didn't expect to see him wearing a sparkly black sequined suit with tassels, a hat with feathers, gold sneakers and a guitar covered in bright stickers! He came onstage carrying a bottle which looked like wine, and placed it on the ironing board at the side of his mic!

He greeted the crowd and thanked them for coming, he expressed his gratitude to Limbo Days for opening the show, but added "after that performance any music sounds good!" and the banter and laughs continued all night.

Pete was very much at home on stage, and content to chat comfortably with the audience. The first song of the night, 'Come Back', was much appreciated by the crowd. Great delivery and stage presence. A firm favourite of mine, 'Sing All the Saddest Songs', was impressively delivered, leading to 'I Still Love You', a real crowd favourite, and everyone sang along.

As the night went on the charismatic Scouse gave us more

funny banter. He preceded each song with an amusing and charming anecdote, he joked with his band and ridiculed them often, 'Heart as Big as Liverpool' a lovely song, provided a very poignant and emotional moment, having been adopted as an anthem by the Liverpool FC fans, in honour of the victims of the Hillsborough Tragedy.

Probably one of Wylie's best-known songs, 'The Story of the Blues' was of course one of the highlights of the night. Ending the event with a cover of Gilbert O'Sullivan's 'Alone Again (Naturally)' was unexpected, but a wonderful rendition of a beautiful song.

Pete was very entertaining and amusing throughout the show, he looked and sounded genuinely happy to be on stage and enjoyed the attention of, and interaction with, the audience. Twenty-five years on from the Songs of Strength & Heartbreak original release and Pete is still the showman and entertainer, his talents are still very much intact. I could have listened to his stories all night and I would certainly love to see him live again. ●





By Bridget Gray

TWIN NOIR

THE LEXINGTON LONDON

credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Berlin Punk/New Wave act TWIN NOIR are a duo that have an amazing dynamic, boundless energy, endless comedy and proud Germanic roots. The '2 Punks and a Tape Machine' Cody Barcelona (guitar, electronics and vocals) and Ian Volt (vocals, bass) took to the stage excitedly, although minus the tape machine on this occasion as it gets travel sick. Their black and white image is fantastic – with matching socks, matching wireless guitars and sparkly guitar straps, and the sound is absolutely phenomenal.

For 45 minutes they delivered an incredible, joyful, in-your-face full-on performance of eight tracks with absolutely superb musicianship, supreme confidence and with a stage presence that belies their years and the duration of their act (they were founded in 2021).

Their skills are almost supernatural – the instruments are an extension of their limbs. Visually, their choreography is beautiful to behold and a reflection of their obvious friendship as they bound around the stage, swapping places, swapping back again. Highlights include Ian's inverted bass guitar poses, Cody's hilarious stop/start stances during gaps in the music, his unfettered sideways slithering across the stage and theatrical kicking over of the guitar stand, climbing down into the crowd and walking around balancing his guitar upside down on his hand. His antics had the girls in the front row screaming, to which he hilariously screamed back in a light-hearted teasing call and refrain. At this point, we were in tears of laughter but the onstage air of frivolity did not detract from the quality of the music and the professionalism of the performance.

Their sense of fun and the way they brought the audience into

their organised chaos aside, the songs themselves were delivered with expertise and exuberance. From the opening song 'Ich tanz' the audience were thrust at warp speed into a fast and furious 40 minutes of the TWIN NOIR catalogue including songs from their debut 2 Punks and a Tape Machine and their new album Chapter 2. Standouts for me include 'Frank,' 'Paul war mal Punk' and 'Destruction' allowing for plenty of audience singalong interaction – proving that music has no language barrier – 'Schwarze Katze' and 'Durchdrehen'.

We were expecting a Germanic, efficient, Berlin-esque performance and what we got was Tasmanian Devils on guitar and bass.

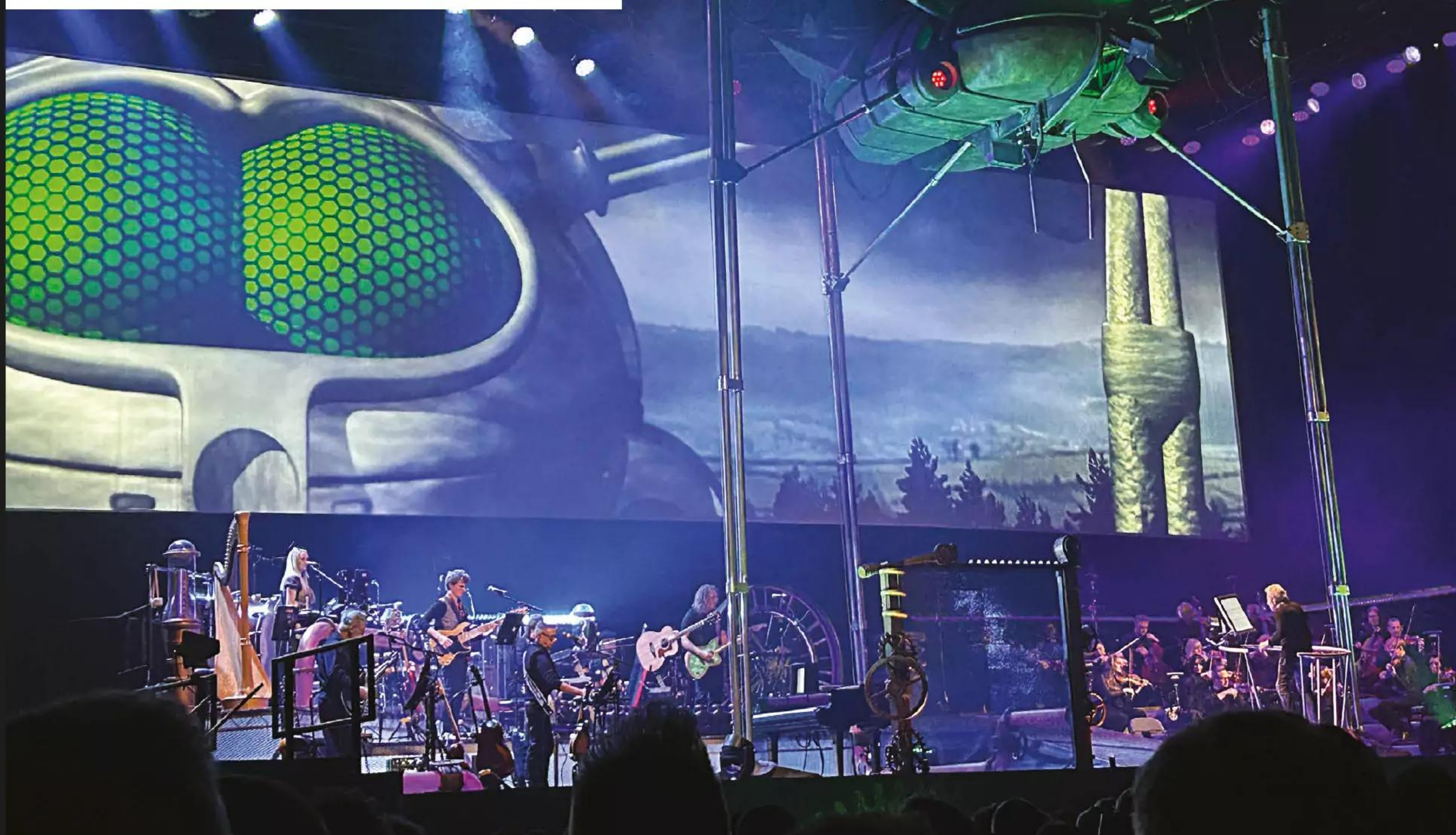
If you get the opportunity to see TWIN NOIR live, grab it with both hands. And feet. I can honestly say this was the most fun I have had at a gig since, well probably forever really. ●



By Bridget Gray

JEFF WAYNE'S THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

ABERDEEN P&J LIVE ARENA



credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Billed on their website as “One of the most trailblazing arena tours of all time”, marking 19 years of touring the live show Jeff Wayne’s Musical Version of The War Of The Worlds – The Spirit of Man Tour 2025 returned to arenas in the UK in April with a star-studded lineup.

Conducted by an energetic Jeff Wayne who bounded onto the stage to enormous applause and starring Busted & Fightstar’s Charlie Simpson (The Sung Thoughts of The Journalist), Nathan James (The Voice of Humanity) Anna-Marie Wayne (Carrie, The Journalist’s Fiancée), Enter Shikari’s Rou Reynolds (The Artilleryman), The Wanted’s Max George (Parson Nathaniel), TV’s Maisie Smith (Beth, the Parson’s Wife) and Liam Neeson reprising his role in 3D holography as The Journalist.

We were immersed in the unfolding plot of the story of H.G. Wells’ disturbing dystopian tale of alien invasion is brought to life in musical form by the familiar compositions reproduced faithfully and passionately by the multitude of talented musicians on the stage where we could hear all the individual elements of the specific instruments and feel the synergetic power of this mighty opus. The show was a multisensory extravaganza including holography, huge screens showing live camera shots and filmed storylines, and the live performances of the cast. The stage set is vast and impressive, with a huge

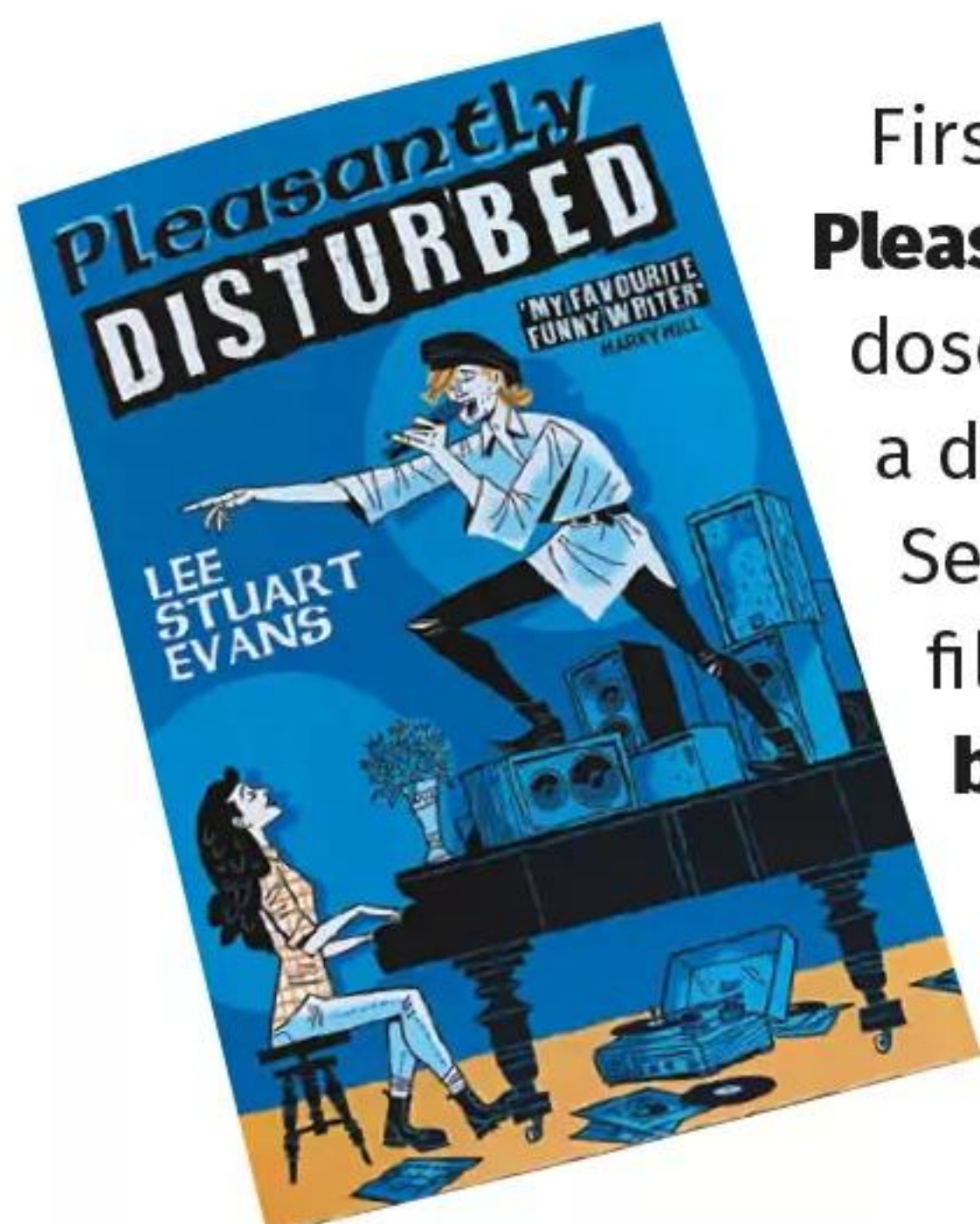
model of the iconic Martian Fighting Machine suspended from the ceiling that descended onto the stage with menacing glowing eyes (instilling the same sort of irrational fear in me as the Daleks), a large mechanical steampunk-esque bridge that extended out over the auditorium bringing the stage spectacle almost within grasp of the audience, pyrotechnics and flames blasting along the front of the stage – the heat of which could be felt many rows back into the audience. During the beautiful ‘Forever Autumn’, leaves billowed from the ‘sky’ falling on the crowd.

We were treated to stunning vocal performances throughout the evening, such as the beautiful harmonies of Charlie Simpson and Anna-Marie Wayne on ‘Forever Autumn’, the fabulous joyful if somewhat overly optimistic ‘Brave New World’ sung by Rou Reynolds, the bombast of Nathan James’ Thunder Child’ and of course the infamously ironic lines “The chances of anything coming from Mars, Are a million to one, he said” from ‘The Eve Of The War’.

The whole show was truly spectacular, I had goosebumps and a Cheshire grin from beginning to end. There is nothing else like this musical and visual pageant on Earth (or Mars) and the standing ovation following the performance could not be more deserved. ULLA!!! ●

BLITZED GIVEAWAYS

This is one of our favourite sections of the magazine as Editors of Blitzed. We get to give something back to you lovely readers and subscribers. In partnership with our friendly promoters, labels and the artists themselves, we are delighted to bring you the opportunity in every issue to get your hands on fantastic signed merchandise, books, albums, rarities and more.



First up, we have a hilarious 80s music-based novel from award-winning comedy writer Lee Stuart Evans. **Pleasantly Disturbed** captures the confusion and urgency of first love, the intensity of music obsession, and a dose of who-dunnit. It's a clever and humorous whirlwind of car repairs, TV talent shows, suspicious activity at a derelict railway yard, romance and a murder investigation. Written by the celebrated staff-writer for the late Sean Lock, Harry Hill, Frank Skinner, Patrick Kielty, Jonathn Ross, etc, this is a love story to rival Gregory's Girl, filled with 80s music references, heart-ache and belly laughs too. **You can get a signed copy of this fabulous book by emailing comps@blitzedmag.com, putting DISTURBED in the subject line, and telling us why you would like to own it.**

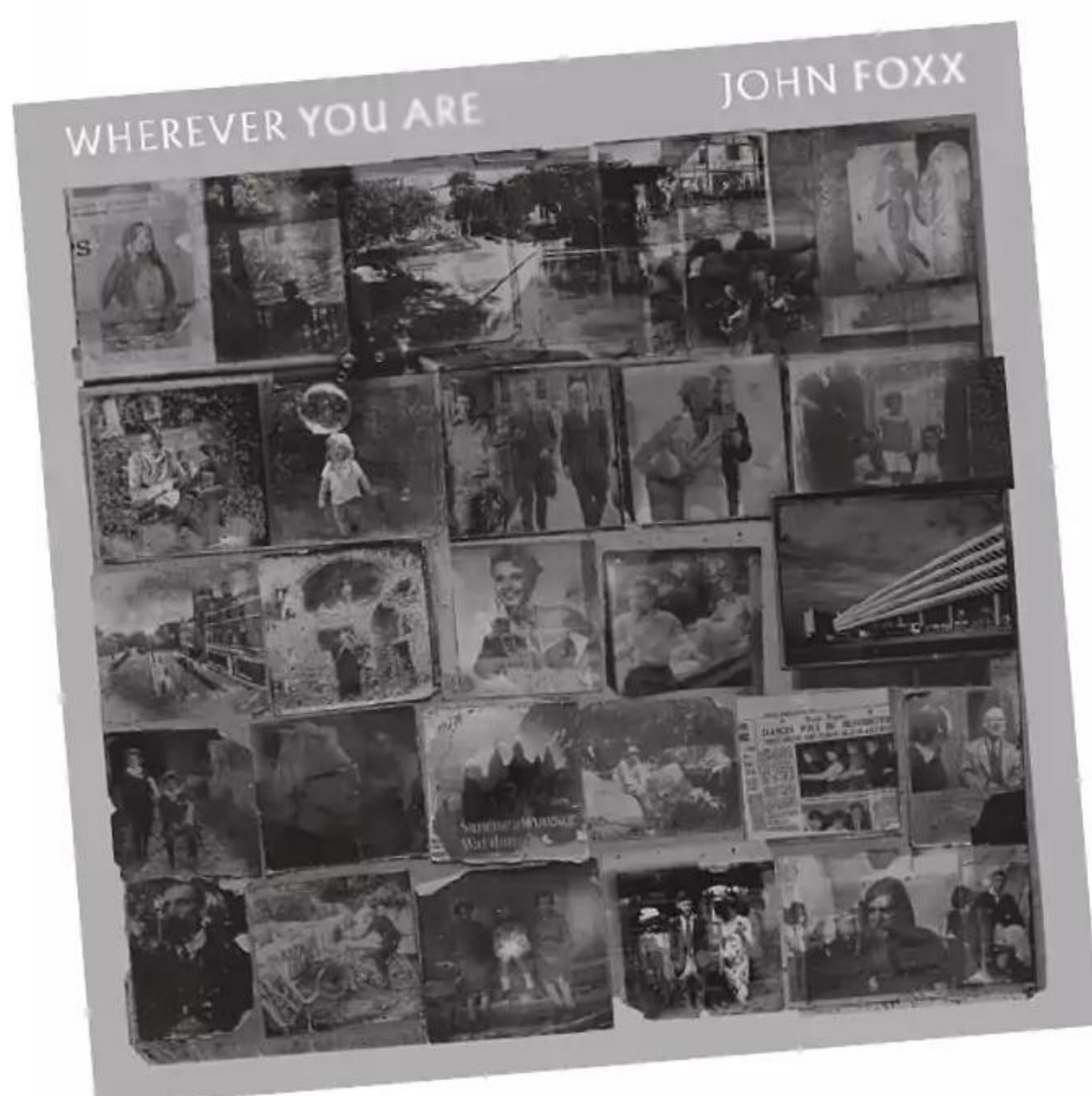
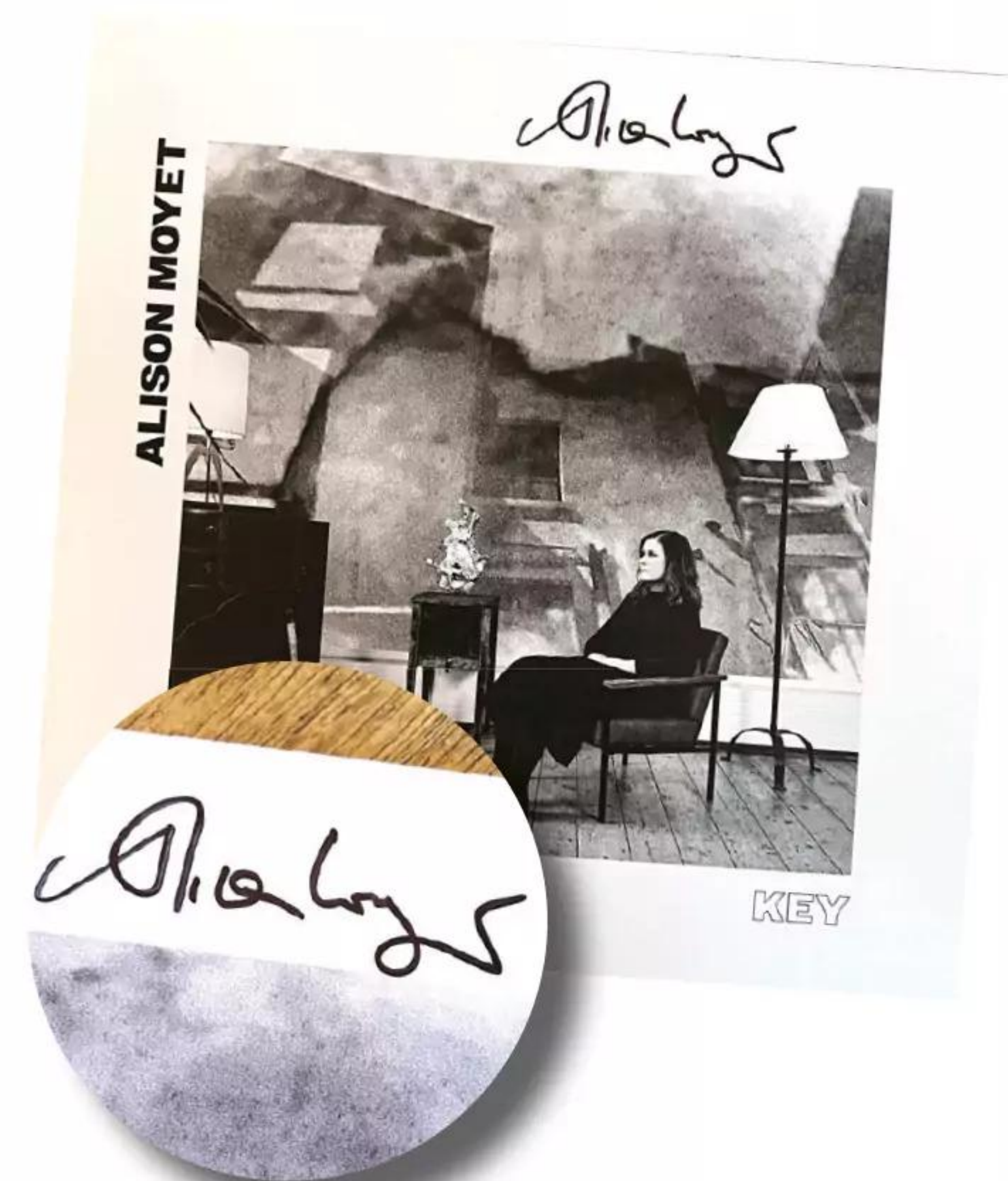
Next, a real EXCLUSIVE courtesy of our friends at London Records. We have two **RARE TEST PRESSINGS** of the **Honey Lingers** album reissue by **Voice of the Beehive**.

Originally released in August 1991, Honey Lingers was the band's second consecutive Top 20 album, reaching Silver sales in the UK. Fully remastered, the new editions are released on limited edition Pink Vinyl LP and expanded 2CD. We are giving away two vinyl test pressings! **You could own one of these rarities by emailing comps@blitzedmag.com, putting BEEHIVE in the subject line and telling us why you would like one.**



Key is **Alison Moyet's** tenth studio album with 16 reworked songs from her solo catalogue encompassing singles as well as deep cuts, together with two new tracks. The album coincides with Alison's 40th anniversary as a solo artist. We have a vinyl record to give away, hand-signed by Alison in London during her album launch in 2024.

Email comps@blitzedmag.com, putting KEY in the subject line and telling us why you would like to own it.



Wherever You Are is a new solo piano album, beautifully played and composed by **John Foxx**, available on vinyl, CD & download. Most of the recordings were made at home and in the early hours of morning in the weeks following his rare live performance at Kings Place, London in October 2023, as part of the BBC Radio 3 'Night Tracks' event.

We are giving away a copy of the vinyl record, signed by John himself.

Email comps@blitzedmag.com, putting FOXX in the subject line and telling us why you would like to own it.

GOOD LUCK!

GIG REVIEW



By Bridget Gray

ALISON MOYET

SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

Alison Moyet is currently in the midst of an epic run of worldwide dates on her KEY | ALISON MOYET | LIVE 2025 tour, marking 40 years as a solo artist.

The support act, Edinburgh born Iona Zajac, had the audience spellbound with her stunning vocals and simple minimal set, often just accompanying herself on acoustic guitar. With the look of a modern Celtic warrior lass, and lilting tones, Iona has something really special and the audience were ably warmed-up and ready for the main event.

Alison is accompanied on stage by accomplished musicians and co-creators of many of the songs featuring on the Key album, Sean McGhee (synthesizers, keyboards, programming, electric bass, guitars, additional backing vocals) and Richard Oakes (guitars), performing not only tracks drawn from her many solo releases, but also of course some Yazoo classics. The songs chosen for the set were not performed in chronological order of their release dates but rather a glorious mix of old(er) and new(ish), dance and ballad, faithful to the original or completely reimagined. Given the huge variety in styles and delivery, it's a credit to all that the entire set worked spectacularly well, and Alison was absolutely on fire, her vocals incredible, her stage presence confident and mesmerising. She also looked incredibly happy, and this shone through in her performance.

Personal highlights for me include the Yazoo tracks, delighting the audience and my inner 15-year old self who felt like we'd all gone back in time. I'm not ashamed to say I lost my mascara during 'Nobody's Diary' only four tracks in. Newer tracks such as 'Impervious Me' were equally warmly received by the fans, this in particular is a personal and insightful track about a woman clearly comfortable in her own skin, writing words that resonate with the person she is today. 'Is This Love' was delivered as a slower, more stripped back version of the classic hit and it was absolutely lush. The biggest surprise for me was the inclusion of an extended version of the Yazoo b-side (in the UK) 'Situation', and the audience loved it. Alison performed three encores, ending in the very fitting selection of 'Don't Go', as none of us wanted her to leave the stage. An utterly brilliant evening, and well worthy of the rave reviews this tour is receiving. ●



credit Kurt Sinclair-Hall

By Jan Blackwell

KIM WILDE SHEFFIELD CITY HALL



Credit Jan Blackwell

Supporting Kim Wilde on her Closer tour were the amazing Cutting Crew of 'Died in Your Arms' fame, and they were a great opener for the night. 'Been in Love Before' was just superb. They performed a few of their own songs as well as a couple of covers, including REM'S 'The One I Love' they chatted a lot with the audience and of course finished their performance with 'Died in Your Arms' which just blew me away, as it's always been one of my all-time favourite songs. I'm so glad I finally got to see it performed live.

After a short break the lights went down, and Kim's band entered the stage obviously to huge cheers, which grew even louder as Kim came on and straight into 'Hey Mister Heartache' followed by the fabulous 'You Came' and my favourite 'Never Trust a Stranger'.

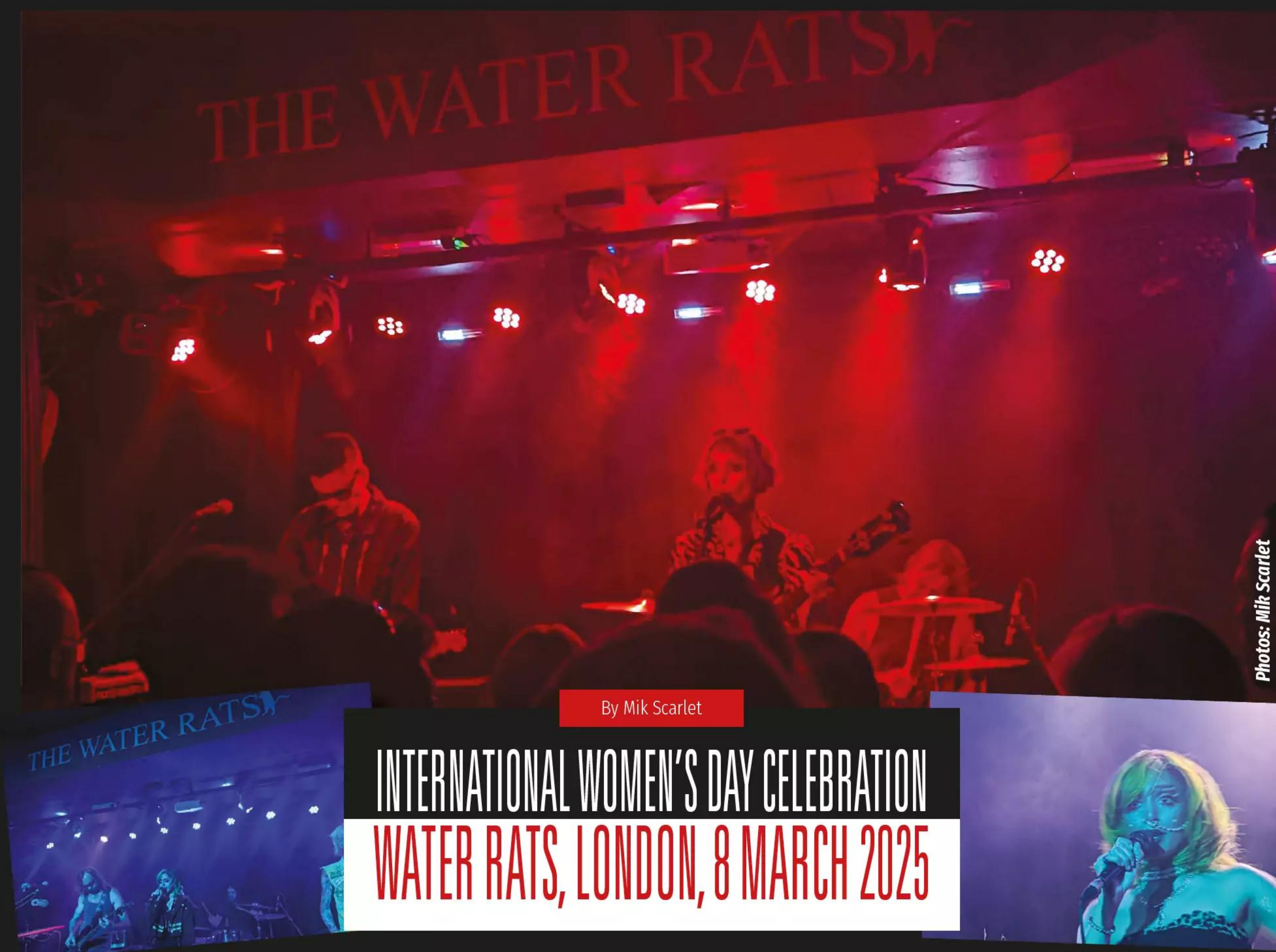
Kim Wilde, now in her mid-60s, still looks and sounds amazing, in fact I think she sounds better than ever. She looked stunning in her black rocker style outfit.

We had a really great set of songs from the past including 'Water on Glass', 'Cambodia', 'You Keep Me Hangin' On', 'Four Letter Word', 'View from A Bridge', all performed perfectly. But tonight was about promoting the new album, Closer, Kim's 15th studio album, released in January this year, and we had almost all the songs from it, I couldn't fault any of them but favourites for me were 'Midnight Train', the absolutely stunning 'Lighthouse', 'Rocket to the Moon', 'Love

Is Love' and a duet with her niece, Scarlett 'Hourglass Human', which was just fabulous. Of course, there was only one song that was going to close the show, 'Kids in America' and it didn't fail to entertain.

Four decades since 'Kids in America' Kim Wilde is still an excellent performer along with her long-standing band, which includes her brother Ricky, a phenomenal guitarist and songwriter, and niece Scarlett who sings just as much as Kim and has a fabulous vocal range. The new album is clearly a family affair, with Kim, Ricky and Scarlett writing all the tracks. The closeness of her band shows in their performance, they look like they're having a ball and so was the crowd, from start to finish it was an outstanding show.. ●





By Mik Scarlet

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION WATER RATS, LONDON, 8 MARCH 2025

Anyone who reads my review column will know I do love a female fronted act. From mellow stuff, like Suzanne Vega and Tori Amos through Blondie and Transvision Vamp to Diamanda Galas, the female vocalist hits home. When I heard of an evening of the female fronted acts playing to mark International Women's Day I had to go. What a night!

I shall paint you a picture of the night, the noise and the kick arse attitude that took over the stage. The show kicked off with She Made Me Do It, with Blitzed fave Will Crewdson of Scant Regard joined by vocalist Shaheena Dax (of Rachel Stamp). They blast out a sound that combines softness and toughness, with a gothic twist. I'm taken at the fact that Will is the guitarist version of a sampler as he seems able to play like a machine in any style he wants. It's amazing to witness and the crowd loved it. She Made Me Do It launched the night in superb fashion. A band to watch for sure.

Next was the revelation of the night for me. My wife had told me about Polly Pik Pocketz and I had bumped into front woman Myura Amara on and off when out on the town, but wowzers. As always late to the party, PPP are Transvision Vamp punk rock for the 21st century and I fell hard. The band is tight, the songs catchy and raucous, and Myura is the ultimate front person. I'm

reviewing their album 'Ang On A Minute in my Scarlet Reviews page. See told you I liked them.

Next was Delta Unit, with two female singers. One on BV's is DJ Sarah Skin Tight and the main songwriter, Denise DeltaUnit, and they play off each other as the band takes us on a journey through some intelligent, thought provoking tracks. Crossing a punk feel with some classic songwriting, as if The Beatles had come out in 1977, Delta Unit change with each track. I love a feisty female lead, so when Denise told off the audience for dancing too much I laughed out loud. Kick arse D.

The night closed with Healthy Junkies. By this time, as you can see from my useless photographs, the room had become ultra-packed and I could see almost nothing, an experience I share with short gig goers everywhere. The Junkies are rockingly good. You don't need to see the band to be knocked backwards by the force of the Junkie sound. Proper pop rock, they took the room by storm, and if I hadn't moved back I think I would have been moshpitted to death.

A fantastic night of great music that celebrated the wealth of amazing female talent out there. Diane and I roamed the streets of Kings Cross bouncing and reliving our youth, fuelled by a night of joy and rebellion. Yes, at our age! ●

THE GIG CARTEL & INSTANTLY LIVE PRESENTS

MARTIN KEMP

Back To The 80's

- LEAMINGTON SPA -
SAT 3RD MAY - THE ASSEMBLY

- HOLMFIRTH -
FRI 18TH JUL - THE PICTUREDROME

- BURY ST EDMUNDS -
SAT 19TH JUL - THE APEX

- FARSLEY -
SUN 21ST DEC - THE OLD WOOLLEN (XMAS SPECIAL)

THE GIG CARTEL BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SATELLITE AGENCY PRESENTS



HEAVEN 17

THURSDAY 22ND MAY
CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

THURSDAY 3RD JULY
BARNSELY BIRDWELL VENUE

SATURDAY 5TH JULY
BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX

GLENN TILBROOK

VOICE OF SQUEEZE

FRIDAY 16TH MAY
BARNSELY
BIRDWELL VENUE

THURSDAY 22ND MAY
CHESTER
THE LIVE ROOMS

THE GIG CARTEL & INSANITY PRESENTS

GARY DAVIES

KICK UP THE 80S

FRI 23RD MAY HOLMFIRTH - THE PICTUREDROME

FRI 10TH OCT NEWCASTLE - WYLLAM BREWARY

FRI 17TH OCT BURY ST EDMUNDS - THE APEX

FRI 28TH NOV CHESTER - THE LIVE ROOMS

FRI 5TH DEC NORWICH - WATERFRONT

FRI 12TH DEC BARNSELY - BIRDWELL VENUE

WWW.THEGIGCARTEL.COM BY ARRANGEMENT WITH X-RAY PRESENTS



TEENAGE FANCLUB

+SPECIAL GUEST
SELMA FRENCH

SUNDAY 10 AUGUST
CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS

THURSDAY 28 AUGUST
SUNDERLAND FIRE STATION

FRIDAY 29 AUGUST
CASTLETON DEVILS ARSE

SATURDAY 30 AUGUST
HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME

SUNDAY 31 AUGUST
CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION

THE GIG CARTEL & JS PROMOTIONS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH DMF PRESENTS

NEW MODEL ARMY



9 OCT | O2 INSTITUTE BIRMINGHAM
10 OCT | SHEFFIELD LEADMILL

11 OCT | LINCOLN ENGINE SHED
19 OCT | O2 RITZ MANCHESTER

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THU 06 NOV - NORWICH EPIC

FRI 07 NOV - HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME

SAT 08 NOV - LIVERPOOL HANGAR 34

THU 13 NOV - LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY

FRI 14 NOV - COVENTRY WARWICK ARTS CENTRE

SAT 15 NOV - FROME CHEESE & GRAIN

SUN 16 NOV - BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2

THU 20 NOV - GLASGOW ST LUKES

FRI 21 NOV - DUNFERMLINE CARNEGIE HALL

SAT 22 NOV - NEWCASTLE DIGITAL

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF

Blitzed

**ON
SALE
4TH JULY**

'WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED' FEATURE EXAMINING COVERS BANDS AND TRIBUTE ACTS, WE REVIEW NUMAN TRIBUTE ACT TUBEWAY DAYS' LIVE PERFORMANCE AT THE STOLLER HALL IN MANCHESTER AND ALSO INTERVIEW FRONTMAN IAN WALL OF SYNTH ABOUT COVERING OTHER ARTISTS' WORK.

'LIFE AFTER LIVE AID'

WE EXPLORE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CAREERS OF SOME OF THE PARTICIPATING ACTS



TONY HADLEY FILLS US IN ON LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER SPANDAU BALLET



THOMAS DOLBY TALKS TO BLITZED ABOUT BALANCING MUSIC AND SCIENCE



WE REVIEW LIVE PERFORMANCES BY VICIOUS PINK AT ELECTRONIC CAFE LIFE VOL 3, ANDY BELL IN BIRMINGHAM, LENE LOVICH IN BRIGHTON, AND BLANCMANGE & MIDGE URE IN DENVER.



PLUS WE INTERVIEW **MARTIN FRY** ABOUT FRONTING ABC AND WRITING HIS LATEST BOOK

ALBUMS UNDER REVIEW INCLUDE RELEASES BY BIRMINGHAM ELECTRIC, TWIN NOIR, CULT WITH NO NAME, CLAUDIA BRÜCKEN, KIFFIE AND LA LUNE NOIRE.

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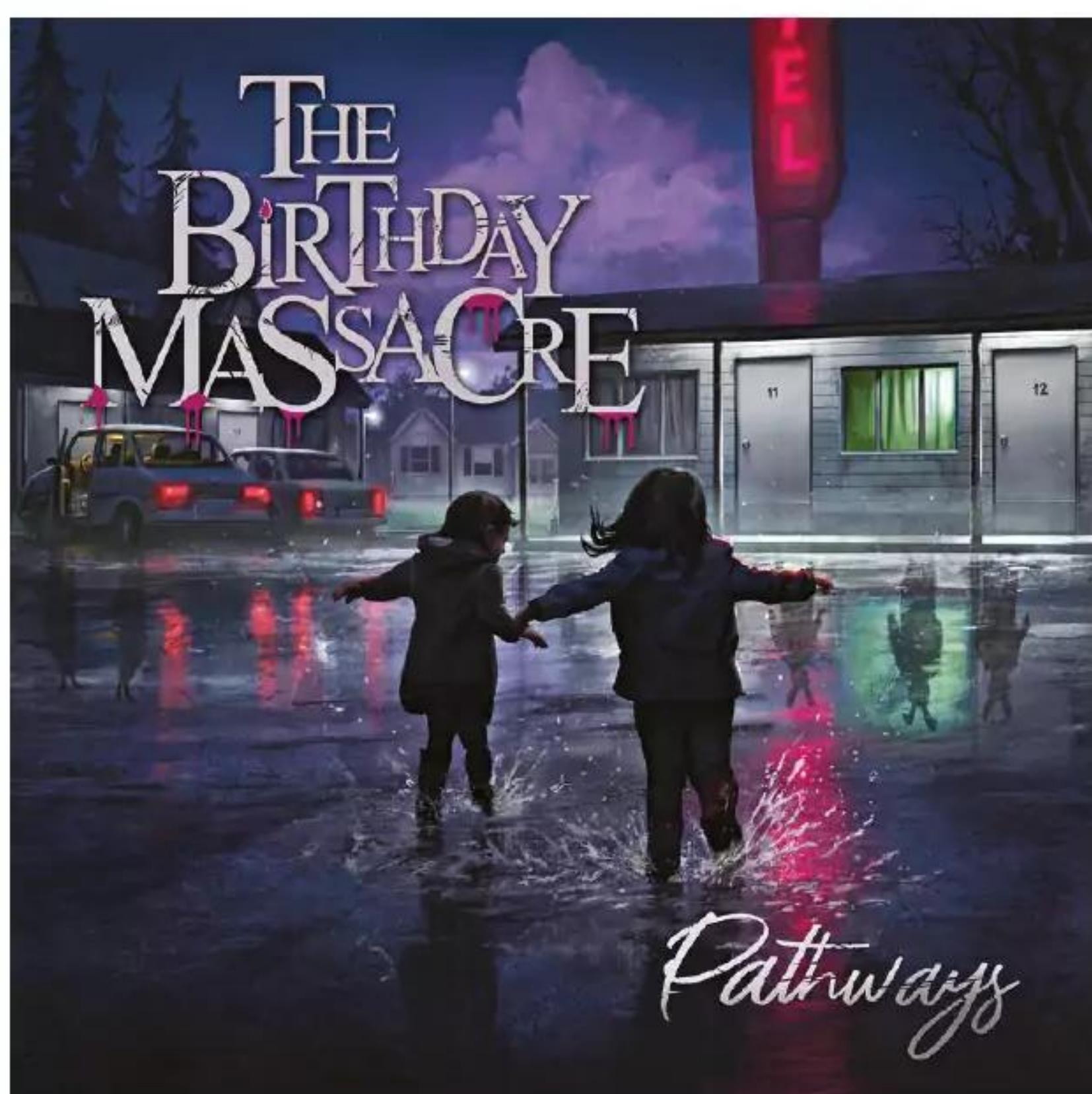
FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF BARRY BLITZ AS HE TRIES HIS HARDEST TO GAIN ENTRY INTO THE COOLEST CLUB IN TOWN!



Analogue Moments

By Mark Buckley

There's a slew of great new albums by some of my favourite artists out right now, and thanks to the folks at Blitzed, I get to share a small selection with you. I hope they excite you as much as they do me!



The Birthday Massacre - Pathways

Both of us here at AnalogueTrash are big fans of The Birthday Massacre, with their music regularly getting played in the label office. So, it should be no surprise that we love Pathways from Toronto's finest. If you're not familiar with the band, their music delves into gothic metal and electronica, and emotions expressed through bright colours and a mix of broad and delicate brushstrokes. They'll be touring the UK this October, and if you like your rock with anthemic 80s nuances and a lot of heart, The Birthday Massacre fit the bill perfectly. <https://thebirthdaymassacre.bandcamp.com/album/pathways>

CocoRosie - Little Death Wishes

One of the few certainties in life is that a new album from CocoRosie will be an event in itself. The eighth album by sibling duo Bianca and Sierra Casady, Little



Death Wishes, sees them at a creative peak as they enter their third decade. A timely affair, it looks at the role of sisterhood in its literal and wider forms and how women continue to challenge the barriers placed before them. Pristine electronica with an experimental edge and sadly pertinent messages – and with Chance The Rapper, baroque pop, and hyperpop making appearances – the Casady sisters kick back against the roles assigned to them, and women in general, by society and the media. <https://cocorosiemusic.bandcamp.com/album/little-death-wishes>

Pale Blue Eyes - New Place

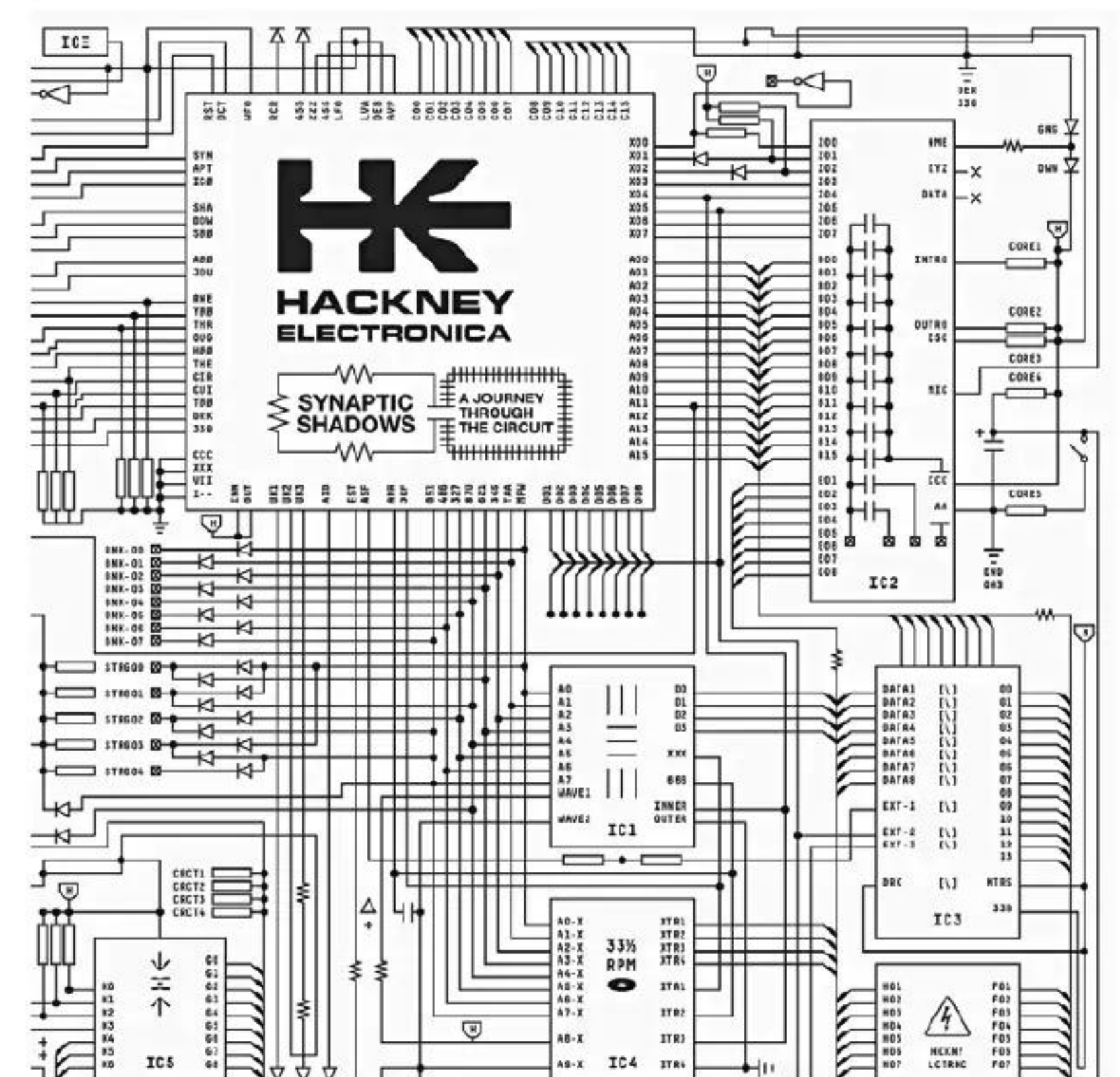


If you're familiar with my blogging exploits, you'll be aware that I love shoegaze and dreampop. New Place is one of the finest examples of that sound, surprisingly coming out of Sheffield – a city long associated with electronica in many forms. That heritage can be heard throughout the album, with the dreamy tones and reverb washes entwining with soft synths, kosmische rhythms, and gliding arpeggios. Change is a major theme of the album, reflecting the recent lives of band members, and echoed in the esoteric nature of the vocals. <https://paleblueeyesmusic.bandcamp.com/album/new-place>

Hackney Electronica - Synaptic Shadows

Hackney Electronica are a new band, but one with members that'll be familiar to those on the UK electronic scene: Quinn Whalley (Paranoid London), Unai Trotti (Cartulis Music), and Margo Broom (Hermitage Working Studios). Their new EP is inspired by nocturnal urban soundscapes, as well as primal wave electronica, a drop of acid house, and ambient rhythms. Close your eyes and lose yourself in the music.

<https://hackneyelectronica.bandcamp.com/album/synaptic-shadows>



Panchiko - Ginkgo

Wider musical tastes have finally caught up with Nottingham's Panchiko, whose mix of lush, slowly moving indie rock seemed out of place in the indie lad swagger of the turn of this century. Ginkgo shows that their return in 2021 was a wise decision, as Owain Davies and bandmates meld a dizzying array of sounds into something that, well, could only be Panchiko.

<https://panchiko.bandcamp.com/album/ginkgo>



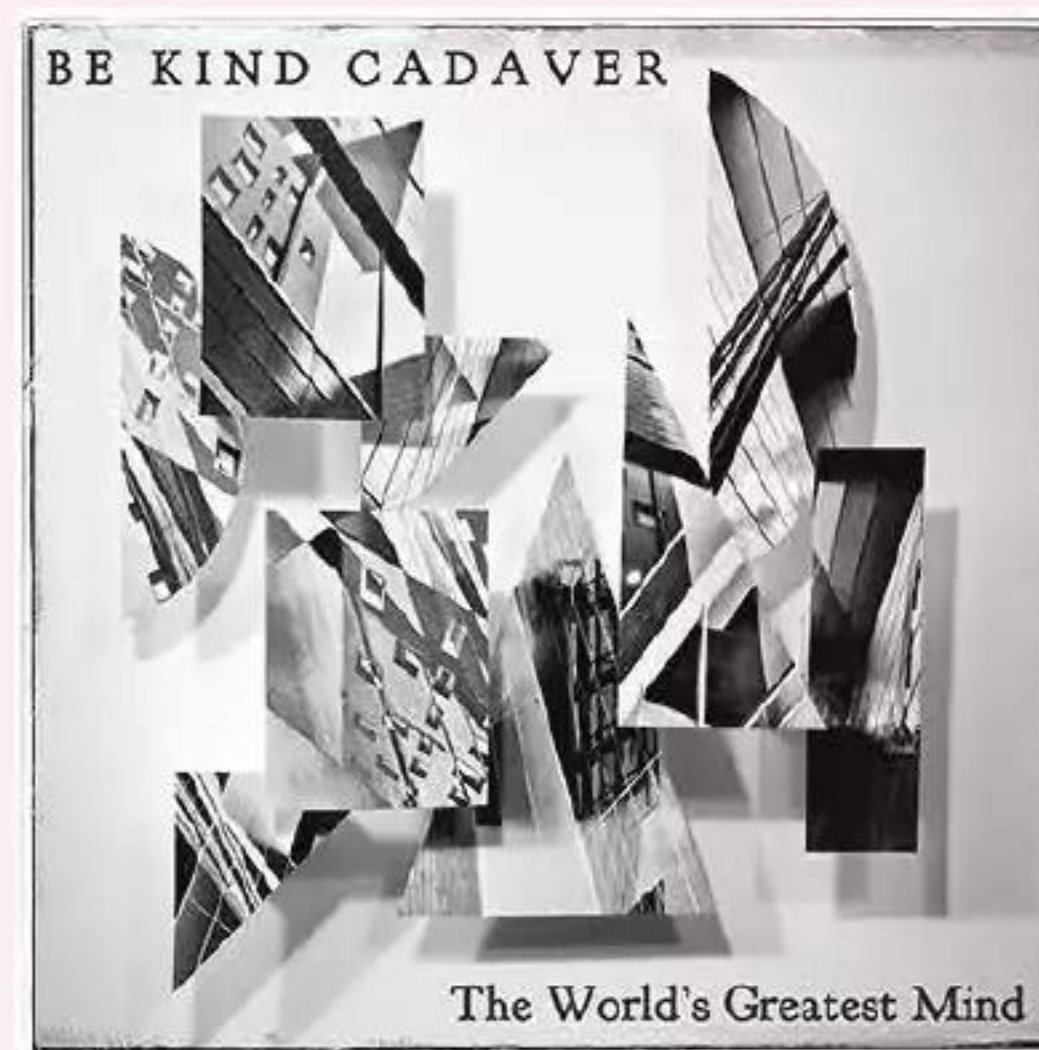
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DEATHBOY
I FORGET BETTER



THE FRIXION
BACK WHERE WE STARTED



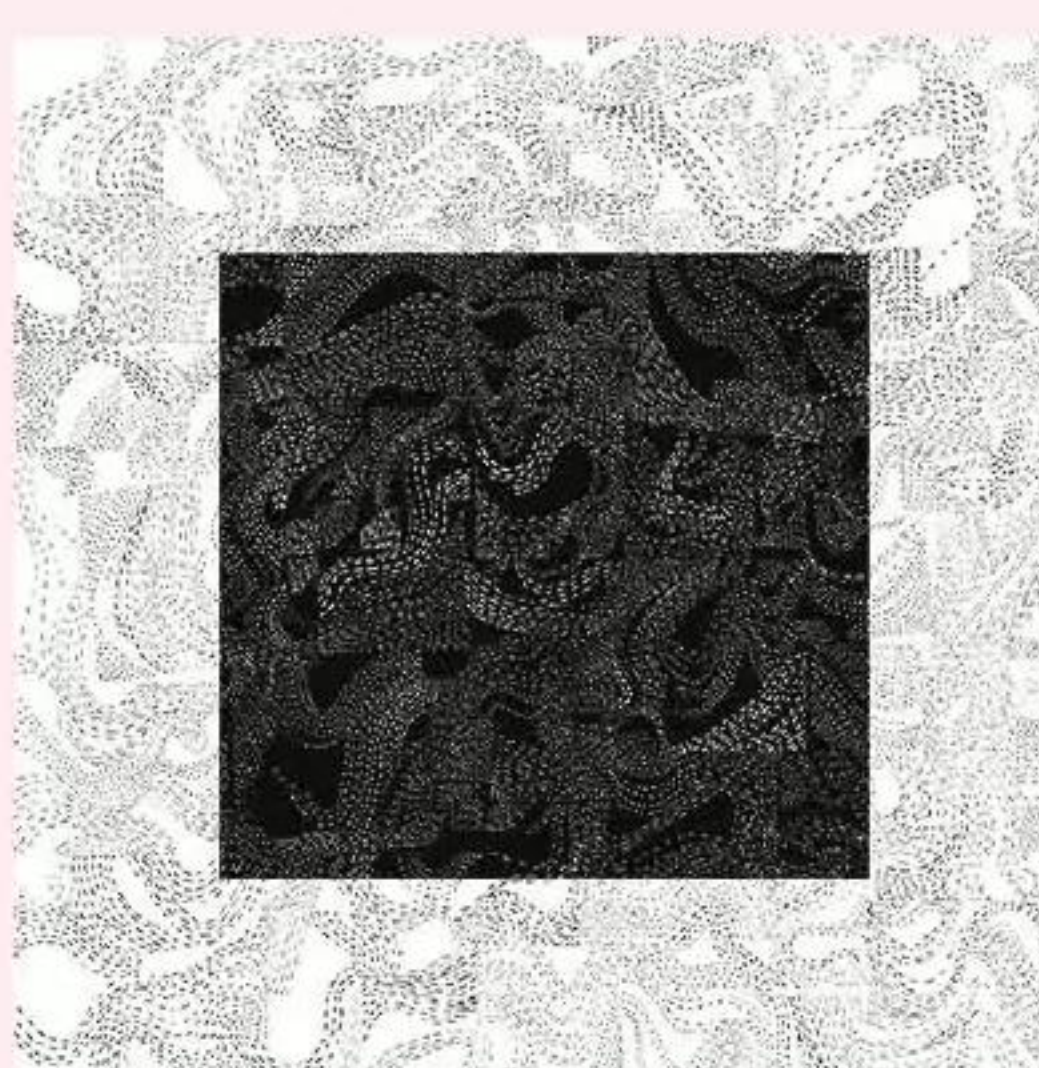
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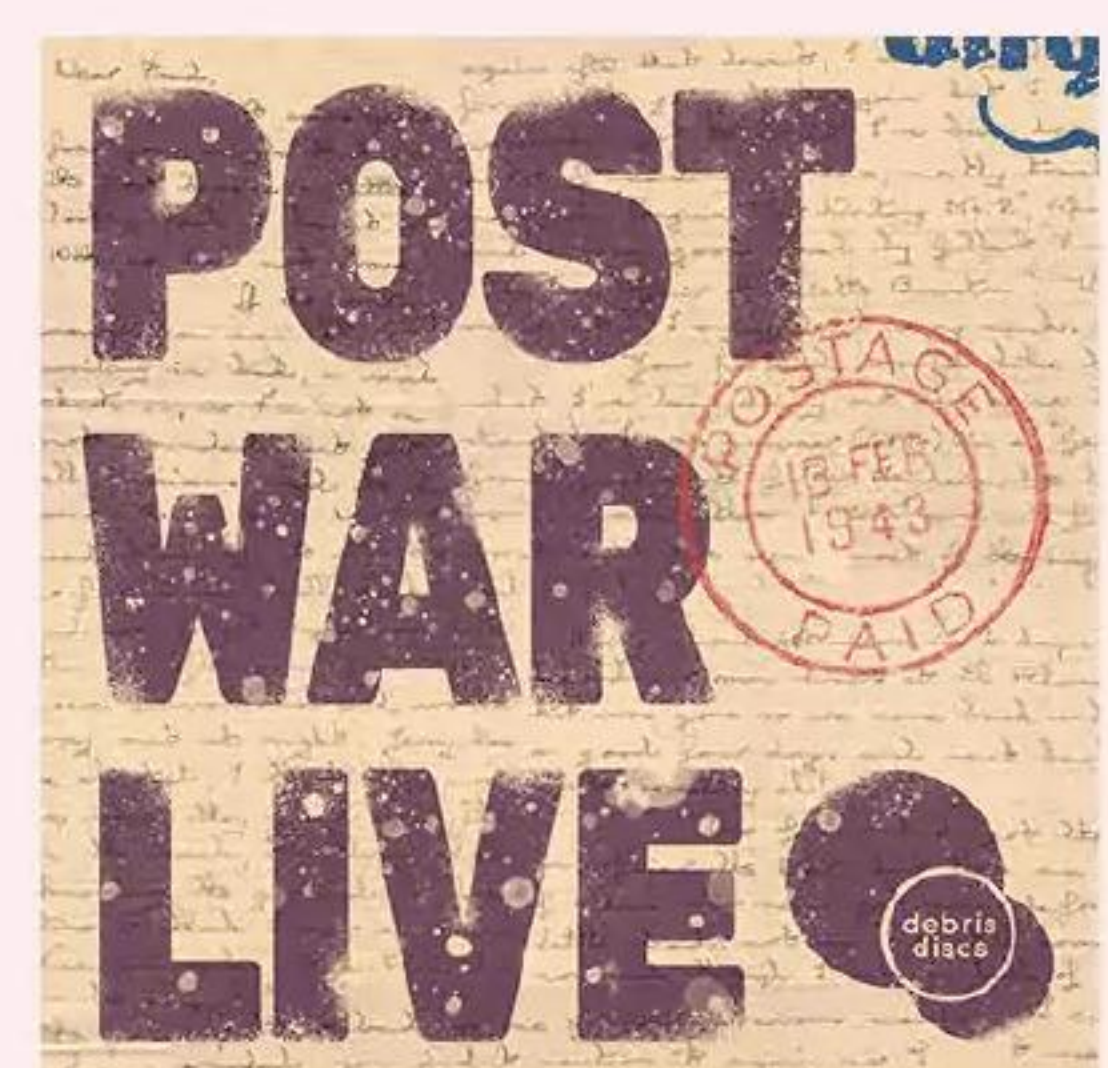
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